

**The Ramakrishna Mission
stitute of Culture Library**

Presented by

Dr. Baridbaran Mukerji

RH10L-8

6

10786

PAPERS ON ART



PAPERS ON ART

BY

J. COMYNS CARR

London

MACMILLAN, AND CO.

1885

OR

TO MY FRIEND

Edward Burne Jones

NOTE.

THE first of the following papers was originally designed to serve as an introduction to the catalogue of an Exhibition of Drawings by the Old Masters, held at the Grosvenor Gallery, and I have thought it better to leave undisturbed the occasional references which it contains to some of the more important examples of Ancient Art collected on that occasion. The paper on Barry was first delivered as a lecture before the Society of Arts.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I.—DRAWINGS BY THE OLD MASTERS	I
II.—JAMES BARRY	79
III.—SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS	122
IV.—THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH	159
V.—ROSSETTI'S INFLUENCE IN ART .	196

PAPERS ON ART.

I.

DRAWINGS BY THE OLD MASTERS.

IN one sense, a drawing by a great master may be said to make a stronger and more direct appeal to the imagination than the most highly-finished painting. Colour, with its vivid charm and boundless resources of realistic effect, becomes under certain conditions rather a hindrance than a help to the understanding of deeper elements of beauty; for colour bears always the unmistakable stamp of its epoch, and its fashion changes with the changing fashions of art. A mode of expression that was of living force at the date of its use may thus grow at last to seem strange and formal; and we find that some effort of sympathy, and a measure of artistic culture, are necessary to the appreciation

of the beautiful colouring of many of the earlier painters. We must understand what were the resources at their command, and what was the ideal motive underlying their work, before we are able to recognise the fitness or the sufficiency of the result; and it is just here that a collection of sketches and designs comes to our help. The material of a drawing is in itself so simple; there is so little in the mode of execution with the silver point or with the pen, wherein one age can boast advantage over another, that our attention is carried at once to what is essential in the master's style. Expressed in such abstract language, his thought can scarcely escape us, nor can he himself escape the need of clear and precise definition. From the drawing we go back again to the painting with a new sense of the humanity and purpose animating the polished and elaborate workmanship. What before seemed only archaic now beats with the pulse of life: we see the artist moving in his work, we recognise the touch of human handicraft, we are able to separate the strength of his individu-

ality from immaturities of style, not his, but of his time—until at last the colour itself, that at first seemed only strange to us, begins to glow with an unsuspected warmth and beauty. Without such help a picture painted long ago often discourages by its aspect the suggestion of human authorship. The very perfection which the artist has bestowed upon the result only serves in a sense to efface the record of his own personality: the rounded completeness of the workmanship leaves scarce a trace of where his hand began or where it ceased to labour. But a drawing made in preparation for such a picture restores as by magic the lost presence of the artist. Its few simple lines have the force and the fascination of spoken words. Their familiar accent lingers in the memory, and brings before us a living image of their author.

But it is not only in strengthening the impression of the artist's personality that the drawings of the Old Masters help to a better understanding of the more finished forms of art: they are scarcely less potent in reminding

us of the presence and power of nature itself. There are certain great masters in whose work the control of the imagination is so absolute, that those who are not specially attracted by their individuality are in danger of missing altogether the secret of their power. Such a master was Leonardo : and yet no one can follow his hand in its exquisite tracery of leaf and flower, in its patient studentship of human face and folded drapery, without carrying away a new sense of his devotion to nature ; and no one afterwards can look at one of his pictures and forget the charm which such devotion brings. With the freshness and fidelity of these studies in our mind, the free exercise of a splendid imagination seems no longer to be divorced from the facts of our common world. That contact with simple reality which keeps invention fresh and sweet is now firmly established ; and as we watch the processes of his art, and note how even the strange sweetness of his mysterious smile has been won from nature, we gain faith to follow his invention and to trust ourselves

altogether to the surpassing fascinations of his style.

And thus to us, as to their authors, the drawings of the great masters are a fitting preparation for their paintings. In them and through them we are allowed to see how frankly the highest invention owns a willing dependence upon nature : how important is the *rôle* that a searching realism plays even in that art which bears most clearly the impress of ideal purpose. They mark the point at which the study of reality begins to yield to the influence of the idea, or wherein the first rough draft of the artist's conception seeks confirmation and support in the renewed observation of the facts of nature. In either case the drawing must possess a peculiar charm and suggestiveness that can scarcely be expected from a finished painting. The realism that underlies the most imaginative design, and the principles of style which determine the final utterance of the artist, are here revealed without any of the elaboration that is afterwards added to the work. We are allowed

to recognise the independent value of each of these great factors in art, and to observe in what measure they enter into the practice of individual masters. A review of the drawings of the great painters, therefore, is almost indispensable to a correct and complete understanding of them. It supplies us with a new test of their powers, which, while it serves to complete, seems sometimes almost to reverse the judgment upon their paintings. Men who could claim but imperfect mastery of colour step into the front rank by right of magnificent qualities of design; and great colourists, on the other hand, are made to confess some failure of invention that has been skilfully concealed in their pictures. Immaturities of execution, that serve to diminish the effect of a picture, are often found to have no counterpart in the drawings by the same hand; and for this reason a collection of drawings appears altogether more modern than a gallery of paintings. The separation of the schools, and differences of time, sink into comparative insignificance by the side of the higher

distinctions of individual genius. We pass from Mantegna to Raphael, from Dürer to Leonardo with a sense of freedom that their paintings would not permit. They meet in the world of design upon an equality impossible in the world of colour; and where they are separated, it is not so much by those inherited traditions of style, that are so quick to fasten themselves upon colour, as by qualities and tendencies that are of individual growth, and belong not to the school, but to the master.

We have hinted at the peculiar beauty of the drawings by Leonardo, and the display of his works in the present exhibition is more ample and more remarkable than that of any other master. The liberal contribution from the Royal Library at Windsor offers material for the study of this strange and potent genius such as can scarcely be found elsewhere. Even the treasures of the Ambrosian Library at Milan, and of the Academy at Venice, though both are rich in records of his hand, do not surpass, perhaps scarcely equal, the magnificent series of

designs exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery. But for these drawings, indeed, we can scarcely pretend to know Leonardo, for he is perhaps of all great painters the one who can be least understood without the supplementary evidence of studies and designs. The finished works from his hand are few, and the greatest of them is irreparably damaged. His paintings, although always deeply impressed with the intellectual intensity of his style, do not reveal the wide range of his observation : they are conceived in a scheme of colour that charms only a few, and they repeat a type of beauty that almost repels those whom it does not entirely enthrall. But his drawings are as a key to unlock the secrets of his genius : they serve as an eloquent commentary upon all that is mysterious in his style, and they mark the subtle processes whereby an intense imagination could accept and yet transform the common facts of nature. All that is strange to us in the completed forms of his art is here carried back to its source in reality. We see with what untiring devotion he perfected

that exquisite system of light and shade with which he veils the beauty of human form, and grants even to the most deformed and hideous features a rhythm and order that makes them possible to art. And further, as we pass in review these lovely female faces, we realise anew the keenness of penetration and the unfailing resource with which he pursued all the subtle changes of human expression. No other artist has ever been endowed with such absolute dominion over the human face. He alone could exhaust the deepest secrets of its character and yet leave the lightest smile undisturbed. In the process of his analysis he never arrests the play of life, and in giving to the result the impress of his own individuality he is not driven to destroy the individuality of his subject. Of a mind so curious and searching that no minutest fact escaped his notice, and yet of an imaginative impulse so constant and controlling that nothing from his hand, not even the smallest leaf or flower, is merely mechanical in its veracity, he has given to these lovely faces the

mingled impression of portrait and phantasy. As we wonder at the completeness and perfection of their beauty we cannot detect what the model has supplied or what the artist has bestowed of his own. The border-lines of art and nature merge and are confused, and under the spell of his genius we think for a moment of the existence of some fair race of beings with these drooping eyelids and gently smiling lips.

And as in the treatment of the face he was always on the alert for these lighter truths, adding to a profound insight into character a record of the most delicate and fleeting movements, so in his general attitude towards nature, he was constantly attracted by what to others might have seemed insignificant. Nothing was too small to arouse his curiosity or to command the devotion of his art. He could lavish upon a spray of blossom, upon a page of landscape, or upon a fold of drapery, all the finest resources of his design; and even upon the least of these things there is impressed that strange intensity of style that gives to the most literal rendering

of nature something of profound suggestion. All that he touched has a certain exquisiteness and perfection of beauty that other men can only attain at rare moments and under particular influences. The fascinations of a strong individuality, not unseldom associated with a limited range of vision, are here joined to an observation that wandered into many fields, and was arrested by the most varied aspects of reality. It is to this extraordinary comprehensiveness of his art that these drawings offer such ample testimony. Here we find a study of a tree, so masterly in the grasp of general character, and so exhaustive in the rendering of detail that it seems like the work of one exclusively devoted to the contemplation of outward nature; and yet beside it there is a group of grotesque heads that prove a still more extraordinary command of human expression. And these heads again, with their hideous deformity of feature, and extravagance of gesture, form a strange contrast with this youthful nude male figure, endowed with a

rhythmic grace of form and sober beauty of movement that even the finest antique could scarcely surpass.

A large number of the drawings by Leonardo are preliminary studies for celebrated paintings. Several of the heads are for the composition of "The Last Supper : " superb studies of hands and feet and drapery are here, belonging to the picture of the "Vierge aux Rochers," in the Louvre; and for the picture of "The Virgin and St. Anne" the studies are still more numerous and more interesting: more interesting because they confirm the existence of two separate and quite distinct compositions of this subject executed by Leonardo da Vinci, and left by him as an inheritance to his scholars; the one expressed in the Louvre picture, where the Virgin sits upon the knees of St. Anne, her face almost in profile, and her graceful form inclined towards the infant Christ, who is on the ground at her feet sporting with a lamb; the other contained in the still more beautiful cartoon possessed by the Royal

Academy, where the Virgin and St. Anne are sitting side by side, their faces turned towards one another, and the Virgin holding in her arms the infant Christ, who bends forward ~~to~~ towards the little St. John. This cartoon, one of the most precious and indisputable works of the master in existence, which when it was first exhibited in 1502 all Florence flocked eagerly to see and to admire, has been until lately scarcely accessible to the public. It is now exhibited in a gallery adjoining that wherein the diploma pictures of the Royal Academicians are displayed, and perhaps to some persons may prove not less attractive than the odd assemblage of works of our own school. In his life of the painter, Vasari says :—

“Finally he made a cartoon, whereon was Our Lady with St. Anne and the Christ, the which also made all artists to marvel ; and when the work stood finished in a room, men and women, young and old, came during two days to see it, as one goes to a solemn feast ; so much did the wonders of Leonardo make all

men astonished. For there was to be seen in the face of Our Lady all that was most simple and most beautiful, and able with simplicity and beauty to lend grace to a mother of Christ, who desires to show a modesty and humility fitting to a virgin, glad and joyful at the sight of the beauty of that son whom tenderly she upholds in her lap; the while with frank gaze she looks down upon a little St. John who sports with a lamb, not without a smile from St. Anne, who, full of lightheartedness, sees her earthly progeny become celestial—all of which suggestions are worthy of the genius of Leonardo.”

At the sale of the late Émile Galichon's collection, the keeper of the prints and drawings in the British Museum was fortunate enough to secure a first sketch for this cartoon, executed in black chalk, washed with Indian ink; and among the drawings from Windsor, now exhibited, are to be found some careful studies of drapery, also for the cartoon. They have been marked as being for the picture in

the Louvre, but it is only necessary to note the disposition of the feet to see that they do not accord with the Louvre design, but are preparatory studies for the wholly distinct composition now in the Royal Academy. It may be added, that in the Ambrosian Library at Milan is to be found a painting attributed to Luini, in which this composition has been adopted, so far, at least, as the relation of the two principal figures is concerned.

On the other hand, several of the drawings at the Grosvenor Gallery belong to the picture in the Louvre. Doubts have been constantly thrown upon the authenticity of the painting, but there can, at least, be no question as regards the origin of the design. The beautiful head of the Virgin from Lord Warwick's collection—almost identical with a drawing of the same subject at Milan—and the black chalk study for the head of St. Anne from the Windsor collection would, in themselves, be enough to prove the presence in the work of Leonardo himself. About the second head of St. Anne

from Windsor, admirable though it be, we do not feel quite so sure; and there are several drawings in continental galleries which also suggest hesitation in assuming that they are actually by the hand of Leonardo, although undoubtedly executed under his inspiration.

From Leonardo's work we pass naturally to that of Raphael and Michelangelo. The genius of each of these men was absolutely independent, but their association is nevertheless inevitable, for they all belonged to an epoch ripe for the full expression of individual power, and their combined energies were needed to carry out to perfection the splendid traditions of imaginative design which for more than a century had been steadily growing in strength. With the loss of any one of them the Renaissance would have been incomplete. Even the greatest of those who preceded them lacked the freedom and resource that they could command—a freedom destined so speedily to sink into licence, and a resource that was soon to be squandered by the exercise of an art that had parted with the

modesty of newly-conscious strength. Artists of earlier date, even where their personality is scarcely less commanding, were partly restrained by the limitations of their school and of their age. Their work still falls so far short of perfection as to justify some general mode of classification. They are at the best but powerful agents in the progress of a wider movement, and they did not live to inherit the kingdom they had helped to conquer. But in the presence of these three artists all efforts at generalisation shrink into insignificance. The individuals themselves are greater than the influences under which they had been formed; so much is added of their own that the original inheritance seems poor by comparison, and still poorer the tradition they were able to transmit to their followers.

In this brilliant group Raphael is particularly distinguished by a gradual and temperate assertion of a great individuality. We do not realise how much was exclusively his own, until we perceive how little even the most

skilful of his school were able to appropriate and carry away. He broke so gently with the teaching of his masters, so insensibly enlarged upon their narrower scheme and less perfect practice, that it is difficult sometimes to mark the lines of separation, and impossible always to detect any signs of conflict or rebellion. From the art of others, his predecessors or contemporaries, he borrowed frankly and without reserve, setting but little store by the more obvious signs of originality, and content, by the addition of the finer truths of nature, gradually to transform the image he had borrowed, and to make the work his own. The drawings in the Grosvenor Gallery are particularly instructive, as showing the extent of his indebtedness, and as illustrating the development of an independent style. They afford evidence of his early relations both with Perugino and Pinturicchio : they present him to us again in the full maturity of his powers, when all that these men had to bestow had been entirely assimilated and absorbed, and finally

they reveal the traces of that later change in his manner, brought about by contact with the overmastering genius of Michelangelo. The very interesting drawing of "The Resurrection" ascribed to Giovanni Santi serves to mark the earliest influence to which the young Raphael was submitted. The father died in 1491, but he had already given to his son, then not twelve years of age, some instruction in design, and even in this drawing, in spite of its formality and straitened technical resource, there is the suggestion of that peculiar grace afterwards perfected by Raphael, and since associated with his name. But when we compare it with two other designs of the same subject—the one by Perugino and the other by Raphael—we are able to realise how much the latter owed to his master, how much more belonged to himself. The picture for which Perugino executed his design is now in the Vatican, and there is a tradition that the young Raphael was the model for the figure of the sleeping soldier in the foreground. Messrs. Crowe and Caval-

caselle,¹ indeed, following Passavant, seek to establish a still closer relationship between master and pupil in the conduct of the work. They profess to recognise in the picture only the hand of Raphael, and they are disposed to deny that either its merits or its defects can be fairly ascribed to Perugino. Their decision is based as much upon the character of the invention as upon qualities of workmanship. The composition, according to their judgment, is entirely the product of youthful and untrained resources, and is without any signs of Perugino's experience. Here, however, is an instance of the value of the old masters' drawings in assisting a conclusion as to points of disputed authorship. Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle make no mention of the design belonging to Mr. Malcolm, and yet, unless this design is shown not to be by Perugino, the main part of their argument falls to the ground. And it would certainly be very difficult to contend that this is not Perugino's design. The manner of execution is

¹ *History of Painting in Italy*, iii. 220.

familiar to us in his drawings, and is in fact repeated in two other examples in the present collection. On the other hand, it is not quite the manner of Raphael's earliest studies. Its defects are scarcely the defects of youth and inexperience, but are rather the limitations of a mature and established practice. That "striving of nascent and undeveloped talent" which Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle profess to detect has certainly no existence in the drawing, and if Raphael assisted his master, as may very possibly be, that assistance was rendered, not in the invention, but in the actual labour of the painting. But although this is not Raphael's original design, it is full of a kind of beauty that is characteristic of his earliest period, and it may be accepted as expressing the measure of his indebtedness to his master. If we seek to know what he afterwards added of his own, or what he gained from other influences, we need only examine the last of the three designs for "The Resurrection," lent by Mr. Mitchell. This drawing belongs to the latest period of

Raphael's career, and in observing the extraordinary animation of the scene it is impossible not to be reminded of Michelangelo's sketch of the same subject in the British Museum. The composition was never carried into painting, but it was very carefully prepared with that purpose, for at Oxford, at Windsor, and at Lisle, we find separate portions repeated, and individual figures elaborately studied from nature. The peculiar interest and value of Mr. Mitchell's drawing consist in the fact that here alone is preserved the complete scheme of the projected picture, and when we contrast this scheme with Perugino's, we realise at a glance the full measure of Raphael's subsequent development. The freedom of movement, the emphasis of dramatic effect, lie far beyond the limits of his master's art, and yet, combined with these elements of a later style, there still remain the traces of that tenderness of sentiment and constant grace of line which Perugino had first impressed upon his pupil, and which the latter was never tempted to abandon.

The drawings in the Grosvenor Gallery present a very full record of the intervening points in Raphael's career, and mark the successive stages by which he reached to this maturity. The head of a young man, with flowing hair, is a study for the picture of "The Coronation of the Virgin," painted in 1503, and for the expression of devotional sentiment it may be instructively compared with Mr. Russell's "St. John" by Perugino. In 1504, Raphael executed the "Spozalizio," now at Milan, and with the preparations for this work is associated the youthful head for one of the disappointed suitors, from Mr. Locker's collection. Between 1503 and the year 1507, when he finished the celebrated picture of "The Entombment," three of the studies for which are here exhibited, there comes an incident in Raphael's career that has been the subject of considerable discussion. During these years Pinturicchio was engaged in painting the frescoes for the Piccolomini Library at Siena, and there has always been a tradition

that the younger artist was actively associated with him in the execution of the work. Vasari, indeed, goes so far as to state that most of the cartoons and drawings for these frescoes were supplied by Raphael, but later writers have striven to diminish the force of this statement, and to reduce the assumed importance of Raphael's share in the partnership. Vasari has so often been proved inaccurate, that modern criticism has learned to be over-bold in questioning his authority. In the present instance, at least, such evidence as we possess is by no means conclusive against him, for the preliminary drawings for these frescoes that survive to us establish beyond dispute that Raphael's help in the work could not have been inconsiderable. One of these drawings is in the Uffizi, another is to be found at Siena, and a third, belonging to the Duke of Devonshire, is now in the Grosvenor Gallery. The last is a complete design for the fresco representing "The Embassy of Æneas Sylvius to Pope Eugenius IV." It is executed in a manner exactly corresponding with that

which Raphael has employed in the sketch-book at Venice, and curiously enough the sketch-book itself contains¹ a sheet of pen and ink studies of drapery for the figures in the Chatsworth drawing. The author of the Louvre Catalogue, contesting Vasari's statement, has alleged that these drawings of Raphael's, when compared with the frescoes, show that Pinturicchio freely altered the younger painter's composition, but such at least is certainly not the case in regard to the drawing before us. The correspondence with the fresco is complete and minute. Other figures have been added to those which Raphael had introduced, but in all the essential parts of the design—in the figures of the Pope and of Æneas Silvius, and in the disposition of the seated cardinals ranged on either side of the composition—the drawing has been followed in every particular. The types of the faces are identical, and even the gestures of the hands are nearly everywhere faithfully adopted. There

¹ Windsor Catalogue, p. 264.

are two other drawings in the exhibition which may be assumed to have some connection with this particular fresco. The first is a study of four of the cardinals in the group to the right of the composition. It is ascribed to Raphael, but it will not bear comparison with the Chatsworth drawing in point of artistic power, though the arrangement is precisely the same; the second is the study of a young man's head in profile, of a type closely resembling the portrait of Æneas Silvius in the fresco, and evidently belonging to this early period of Raphael's career.¹

In the sketch-book at Venice, which contains

¹ There is another drawing assigned to Pinturicchio (827), and assumed to be a study for the same fresco. In the Catalogue of the Malcolm collection (p. 58) it is described by Mr. J. C. Robinson as a study for the left-hand group in the composition, but this description is not quite correct, as a reference to the Chatsworth drawing, or to the fresco itself, will serve to show. Neither the disposition of the figures, nor the types of individual faces, correspond with the fresco. If this is indeed a drawing by Pinturicchio for the fresco, we are driven to the conclusion that Raphael, and not his master, gave the final shape to the design.

the studies of drapery for the Siena fresco, there is also to be found a careful copy of Mantegna's print of "The Entombment." It is not at all surprising that Raphael, who was himself about to attempt the rendering of this great theme, should have turned for inspiration to the Paduan artist. Neither Perugino nor Pinturicchio could afford him much help towards the attainment of the kind of dramatic power that was here demanded of him. The picture that he produced in the year 1507 therefore marks a new departure in his art. In direct force of invention, in fearless grasp of the deeper realities of passion, it cannot be said to rival Mantegna's energetic design, but as compared with Raphael's earlier works, or with the works of his masters, it reveals a more liberal appreciation of varied human feeling. In the treatment of the face, the artist is no longer content with the saintly smile that Perugino loved; in the action of the figures he has advanced beyond the mere utterance of religious devotion. No wonder then, that in

entering upon this new phase of his art, he should have made many experiments before determining the final shape of the design. For this picture of "The Entombment" there are extant no less than twenty drawings exhibiting different forms of the entire composition, or concerned with the separate study of individual groups. The examples from Mr. Malcolm's collection are among the most important of the series. Apart from their connection with the picture, they are specially interesting as illustrating that peculiar style of free and facile draughtsmanship which was henceforward to be adopted as the artist's most characteristic mode of expression. In the power that he possessed of fixing with a few touches all that was most essential to his design, Raphael is without a rival in the history of art. Others may claim a more constant fervour of religious feeling, a deeper insight into the secrets of human passion, a stronger respect for distinctions of individual character, but in the power of blending these varied elements of beauty into a form at once

effective and graceful, he is absolutely supreme. He could seize at once upon the dramatic significance of a chosen theme, and grant as by instinct to every face its appropriate emotion, to every action its rightful force. In these brilliant experiments in design, he employed only so much of reality as was needed to fix the idea. He did not pause either to exhaust the intellectual possibilities of the subject or to elaborate the details of execution, and the means by which he registers his invention are often so slight, so few the significant lines that serve to map out the composition, and to enforce the ruling sentiment of the scene, that in no other hands but his could they be made to seem sufficient. In the Grosvenor Gallery are to be found some admirable examples of this freer style of draughtsmanship, which only reached its full development in the later period of his career. The composition of "Venus" surrounded by Amorini is a delightful specimen of the class; and we may mention besides the three nude figures from the Earl of

Warwick's collection, and the spirited drawing, in coloured chalk, of the Pope borne along upon his chair of state, lent by Mr. William Russell. The subject of this remarkable study is repeated in a pen and ink drawing in the Louvre (No. 326, Catalogue des Desseins), where, however, there is the addition of a second group of a cardinal mounted on a mule. In the Windsor Catalogue¹ both drawings are classed under the head of studies for the well-known composition of the Heliodorus, but, as a matter of fact, the arrangement is entirely distinct, and the figures are differently grouped. The cartoon for the picture known as "La Belle Jardinière," from Lord Leicester's collection,² exhibits the work of the master in the year following that of the execution of "The

¹ Windsor Catalogue, p. 200. 10786.

² Another study of a "Madonna and Child," from Chatsworth (603), also belongs to the artist's Florentine period, and is probably a first sketch for the celebrated picture of "The Holy Family with the Goldfinch," now in the Uffizi. In the composition as finally adopted the figure of St. John is added, and the Virgin holds the book in her left hand.

Entombment." The picture was painted in 1508, a date memorable in Raphael's career, for in the month of March of this year he entered the service of Pope Julius II., and began the magnificent series of works in the Vatican upon which his fame may be said mainly to rest. We have here some studies of angels for the fresco of "The Dispute of the Sacrament" which was the first of the four great decorations for the Stanza della Segnatura, and now accepted as the first work executed by the painter on his arrival in Rome. A record of a subsequent undertaking—the decoration of the Farnesina—is found in the figure of Apollo, of which there is a replica in the Albertina Gallery at Vienna; and to a still later period may be assigned "The Rape of Helen" (615) from Chatsworth, and the sketch for "The Resurrection" already noticed.

The vast enterprises with which Raphael was entrusted at Rome naturally demanded the employment of assistants. As the works progressed, he gradually gathered about him a

company of diligent scholars, who laboured under his direction, and acquired in some measure the characteristics of his style. Of these Giulio Romano was the most famous, though not perhaps the most deserving, and with him were associated Polidoro da Caravaggio, Giovanni da Udine, Pierino del Vaga, and Timoteo della Vite. All of these artists are represented at the Grosvenor Gallery, and a comparison of their drawings with those of Raphael, offers perhaps the most powerful testimony to his unapproachable greatness. For, as we note the transition from master to pupil, we see that all the finer elements of Raphael's art were absolutely incommunicable. That strange intensity of style which the weight of Leonardo's influence impressed for a while upon the practice of a school, was altogether foreign to the nature of his genius. His art was never charged with great force of passion; it deliberately abandoned the extremes of religious sentiment or of human emotion. While other men were striving to represent great ideas, and were

making of their art an image of the tragic fortunes of the world and the sublime aspirations of men, he was content to observe and to record those constant elements of beauty that underlie all experience, and are the outgrowth of the unchanging conditions of our common life. "Inspired," to quote the fortunate phrase of Hazlitt, "by the impulse that breathes its soul over the face of things," he discovered the charm that lies in the simple beauty of the body, and in those spontaneous movements undertaken without the consciousness of any strong emotion. Whatever else be found in his painting is not of the finer essence of his genius. In the rendering of ideas, in the representation of drama, he competes with others upon ground where they were more than his equals, and yet, by an evil mischance, it was precisely in these inferior attributes of his style that his pupils strove to follow his example. They missed the secret of his devotion to nature, and exaggerated the artifice of rhetorical display that latterly had begun to encroach upon the true exercise

of his genius. And thus it happens that Giulio Romano, thought in his time to be the prince of the school, and accepted as the legitimate heir of his master's greatness, is perhaps of all his followers the one who least claims the respect of modern criticism. His drawings have all the defects capable of being developed from the principles employed by Raphael; there is in them none of that exquisite refinement of observation by which the master had enriched and corrected a facile invention; they are neither inspired by strong imagination, nor controlled by reverence for nature, and we turn with a sense of relief from their pretentious grandeur to the works of artists like Polidoro da Caravaggio and Giovanni da Udine, who laboured not so much in imitation of Raphael as under his direction. Entrusted with the duty of carrying out subordinate parts of the vast paintings in the Vatican, they developed a style more modest in its pretensions and sounder in its results. Their design has therefore something of independence and originality, and we

may note especially, as an exquisite example of the second of these two artists, the scheme of decoration lent by Mr. Russell, showing delightful invention of ornament most carefully expressed in colour. Mr. Russell also contributes another specimen of the master; and a third, forming part of a plan for the decoration of a ceiling, is from Mr. Poynter's collection. Pierino del Vaga, like Giovanni da Udine, was chiefly employed upon the painting of the arabesques in the Vatican, and two drawings by him in the Grosvenor Gallery,¹ though not directly relating to this particular work, nevertheless bear witness to the inclination of the artist to dwell with enjoyment upon the elaboration of ornamental detail. Like the finished sketch of Giovanni da Udine already noticed, they are

¹ The second of these drawings is ascribed in the Chatsworth collection to Correggio, and is therefore catalogued as the work of that artist in the Exhibition. It is, however, most unquestionably by Pierino del Vaga. In the Academy at Venice there is a drawing of the same subject, only slightly varied in details, which is signed with the monogram of Pierino del Vaga; and a third version of the composition, also by Pierino del Vaga, is in the Albertina Gallery.

both in colour, a fact in itself of some interest, as showing that Dürer was by no means alone in the employment of water-colour as a mode of sketching. *Some frieze-shaped designs, of great elegance in arrangement, serve to illustrate the talent of Polidoro, an artist who is said to have formed himself upon the study of the antique.* There can be no doubt that he was powerfully influenced by the mode of design appropriate to sculpture in relief, but what is chiefly noticeable in many of his drawings is the extraordinary animation that he has added of his own. He has given to these groups a force of light and shade, and an impression of vigorous and natural movement, which prove that he understood the greater liberty allowed to a painter, and possessed the resources to carry his work beyond mere imitation. The drawing from Chatsworth, here classed under the School of Raphael, is identical in design with an outline engraving of a picture, once attributed to the master himself;¹ and among the examples of

¹ See Landon's *Engraved Outlines*.

Giulio Romano may be recognised several compositions belonging to the series of paintings illustrating the Trojan War, executed by the *artist for the Ducal Palace at Mantua.*

It is not a little remarkable that Michelangelo, like Raphael, should have prepared studies for a projected picture of "The Resurrection," which was also destined never to be carried out. The British Museum possesses a sketch for the entire composition, and other drawings bearing upon the scheme are to be found at Windsor, at Weimar, and in the Louvre; but there is no record of the work of greater beauty in itself than the carefully finished figure of Our Saviour contributed by Mr. Malcolm to the present exhibition. Scarcely would it be possible to find anywhere a more perfect specimen of the artist's power, a more convincing example of the modesty as well as the mastery of his genius. Every detail of form and modelling is elaborated with the patience of a student; and yet with this absolute respect for nature, there is associated the most unmistakable emphasis of individual

style. That fulness of vitality, which is of the very essence of Michelangelo's invention, penetrates every part of the design, and gives to the graceful form such an impression of ease in movement as makes the work of all earlier artists seem, by comparison, strained or formal. The principle of action which holds the same relation to art that drama holds to poetry, is here carried to the farthest point of development. What Leonardo had done for the human face in combining a constant vivacity of expression with the utterance of deeper truths, whether of passion or character, the genius of Michelangelo was destined to effect for the entire human frame. Every limb and every muscle are endowed with a mobility that has been rendered and not arrested by the craft of the artist; and in the supple outline and delicate play of light and shade, the expression of the profoundest knowledge is reconciled with an effect of unfettered and spontaneous life, that, in its onward movement, knows not a moment's pause. In the drawing of a dead

Christ, from the Earl of Warick's collection, we may see how readily this splendid command of technical resource lent itself to the utterance of human passion. The strength and sublimity of Michelangelo's imagination are here asserted in a design of fearless simplicity and directness. With lesser artists, whose invention is not equal to their theme, there is always a tendency to indulge some rhetoric of style in the hope thereby to rise to the level of the idea. But it is the privileges of genius to be at once familiar and sublime; to seem to be occupied merely with common realities, and yet so to interpret those realities as to endow them with the highest spiritual significance. Nothing could be simpler, nothing more potent, than the arrangement of the group of women who bend over the dead body of Christ, recumbent upon the knees of His mother. In the choice and contrast of expression, the artist seems almost to have exhausted the possibilities of tragic beauty. From the swooning countenance of the Virgin, her eyes averted and cast down, and the gentle

sorrow of the youthful face that nestles on her shoulder, we pass to note the more eager gesture of others of the group,—the mingled terror and curiosity of the older woman peering from above, and the shrinking glance of the half-hidden form in the background. And all these changes of dramatic expression as they sound the various notes of suffering and pity, serve besides to grant a sense of greater dignity to the central figure, whose wearied head and lifeless limbs have fallen into the terrible repose of death. A reference to the drawing itself will show with what mastery the suggestions of these intellectual truths have been submitted to the laws of design; how completely at every point the author has guarded and observed the claims of art, striving no less for the pictorial grace of his work than for the utterance of the particular message it is destined to convey.

We return to Mr. Malcolm's collection, peculiarly rich in important examples of Michelangelo, in order to note several preliminary designs dealing with the subject of "The

Crucifixion." One of these designs of the figure of Christ on the cross is identified by Mr. Robinson with the study which Michelangelo sent as a gift to Vittoria Colonna. Certainly it accords in all respects with the description given by Condivi. "Out of regard for her," says this writer, in a passage quoted by Mr. Robinson, "he made a drawing of a Christ on the cross, not as if dead, as in the usual representations, but in the supreme moment of His agony, with His head raised towards the Almighty as if in the act of saying 'Eli, Eli,' and in which the body is seen writhing in the acute pangs of suffering, and not hanging lifeless on the cross." Vittoria Colonna, in a letter preserved in the British Museum, makes graceful acknowledgment of the arrival of such a design. "I have received your letter," she writes, "and have looked at the Crucifix, a work which truly effaces the remembrance of all the other representations I know;" and at the close of the letter she adds, "I have examined it narrowly both with glass and mirror, and nothing more

perfect has ever presented itself to your sincere—Marchesa di Pescara.” In spite, however, of the exact correspondence of the design, there is room for doubt whether the drawing before us is the original of Condivi’s description. In style of execution, it would seem scarcely to belong to the period of Michelangelo’s friendship with Vittoria Colonna (1536–1546), or at least we must admit that the manner of working is very different from that which characterises the two other drawings of “The Crucifixion” here exhibited. These are unquestionably by the hand of Michelangelo, and are presumably of his later time. One of them may possibly, as Mr. Robinson believes, belong to the composition undertaken for the Marchesa di Pescara, although the action of the principal figure misses the particular expression described by Condivi as its distinguishing characteristic. We know by the evidence of other collections that Michelangelo made many drawings of the subject showing important differences of design, nor is it necessary to assert that they all belong to one

and the same period. The studies at Windsor seem to be attached to the same series as these two lent by Mr. Malcolm, while the complete design in the British Museum, showing the three crosses, has a different motive, and is certainly not connected with the drawing executed for Vittoria Colonna. Amongst the drawings in the Grosvenor Gallery are to be found a number of studies bearing upon the progress of the works in the Sistine Chapel. The figure of Adam, lent by Mr. Locker, is perhaps the most complete and masterly example of the artist's powers of draughtsmanship here exhibited. A worthy companion to it is to be found in the figure of Haman, painted in one of the angles of the ceiling; while for the fresco of "The Last Judgment" we have preliminary sketches lent by Mr. Malcolm and Mr. William Russell, the latter of whom also contributes the well-known drawing of an arm employed by Flaxman as an illustration to his work on anatomy. A vigorous sketch with the pen for the fresco representing "The Conversion of St. Paul"

serves to illustrate the artist's latest style of draughtsmanship.

Michelangelo stands as the crowning figure in the history of the Florentine School; but the great principles of imaginative design which he carried to perfection had been steadily growing for more than a century, and the various attributes of style which by the might of his genius he was able to combine, are separately reflected in the works of his predecessors. From the time of Giotto, whose transcendent genius forecast, and in some sense comprehended, the destinies of the School, a race of painters, extraordinarily gifted, had laboured to enlarge the technical resources of their art, and to test by experiment the worth of its various ideals. The service of religion, the worship of nature, the study of the antique, the love of poetical legend, all these diverse claims were freely welcomed by the masters of Florence, and presented again in the forms of painting or sculpture, with a constantly increasing power and sustained elevation of purpose to which the history of the human

mind scarcely offers a parallel. But during the progress of this forward movement, it was inevitable that the work to be done should be partly subdivided, and that individual painters should become specially responsible for the development of particular truths. The art of Giotto was complete as the art of Michelangelo was complete, but in the passage from the straitened resources of the one to the perfect capabilities of the other there intervened a period of arduous research and experiment, during which it was impossible for any single artist to cover the entire field. The different motives of style that had lain dormant in the first efforts of the School, needed to be distributed and separately studied before they could be recombined in a new and more powerful harmony. And thus we may find here and there in the work of those who were preparing for this final triumph, an emphatic expression of certain great qualities of art, at the expense of others by which they should be balanced and controlled. The energy of invention displayed, for example, by

such an artist as Signorelli, sometimes breaks away from the absolute control of beauty ; while on the other hand, Botticelli's faultless instinct, his perfect loyalty to the poetical truth of a chosen theme, and his persistent striving for the most subtle modes of expression, are nevertheless without the correctness that many a dull and uninspired student of a later time could have supplied. Both these men we may say were indispensable factors in the creation of that larger empire that was the inheritance of their successor, by whom the characteristics of each were carried to grander issues, and finally reconciled. Nothing of the vigour of Signorelli's realism is lost by Michelangelo, although the mould in which it is displayed has become heroic ; nor can Michelangelo's rendering of human emotion be said to miss any of the tenderness of Botticelli's style, although here again the gentle sadness of expression is deepened into tragic intensity. The drawing by Botticelli, lent by Mr. Malcolm, exhibits his peculiar shortcomings in technical practice, as well as the particular charm of his

invention. It needs no extraordinary penetration to perceive that the proportions are exaggerated and the extremities ill-drawn. Such defects make no effort to hide themselves; but against them we have to set the elegance of the composition as a whole, the free and graceful movement of the principal figure, and the unforced vivacity reflected in the childish faces by her side. In every line the artist displays a sympathy with nature and a keenness of perception that are far rarer than mere completeness of studentship. The drawing may here and there be reckoned false, but its motive is always true; it is governed by a distinct idea of beauty; and in the attempt to present an allegorical conception the artist does not forget or violate the laws of artistic design. Mr. Robinson supposes that this is a first study, and for one of those symbolical figures which the artist loved to paint on the reverse of his portraits. This may well be, but it is also possible that we have here a portion of a larger composition, intended to represent Autumn. That Botticelli was attracted by the

subject of "The Seasons" we know from the evidence of two of the most beautiful of his pictures. The panel in the Academy at Florence treats of Spring-time; the nude Venus at the Uffizi, driven by gentle winds across the rippling water, may be taken as the personification of Summer; and we may suppose that he had intended to embody the ideas of Autumn and Winter upon a similar scale. The smaller and quite distinct series of paintings representing "The Seasons," lately exhibited at Burlington House, evidently inspired by his genius if not actually the work of his hand, afford further evidence of his attachment to this particular theme.

The examples of Signorelli's design are more numerous. They comprise two preliminary studies, of great interest, from Mr. Russell's collection, and a very masterly drawing of "Hercules and Antæus," from the Royal Library at Windsor. This is perhaps the most complete example of the characteristic features of his style; but to appreciate the full

strength of such a performance, we must not dwell with too much insistence upon the ideal claims of the subject intended to be represented. The legends that an Italian painter was summoned to illustrate, did not always accord in their spirit with the spirit of his art; they were seldom chosen with any special reference to the particular bent of his genius. Raphael did not grow devout in the painting of Madonnas; nor did Titian approach nearer to classic severity of line by giving to shapes of superbly-painted flesh the titles of Pagan goddesses. We must not, therefore, seek in this drawing of Signor-elli's for any powerful suggestion of heroic character. He was not apt, like Botticelli, to linger over the poetic aspect of his theme until every line became infected with the beauty of the painter's inward thought, but was content if, as in the drawing before us, he could find in the legend an occasion for the vivid display of physical action. Of all Florentine painters he felt most keenly, and most frankly enjoyed, the growing power of art to seize and record every

movement and gesture of the body. He loved to exercise his newly-acquired dominion over the realities of nude form, to revel in the liberty and resource that were but lately won, and to assert, without the need of any other motive, the infinite capabilities of expression that had hitherto been either wholly subdued to the service of religion, or limited by imperfect technical knowledge. In this devotion to an ideal of physical strength and beauty, Signorelli stands as the exact counterpart of Fra Angelico. To the latter there was but one motive for art as for life; every gesture to be lovely must be a gesture of adoration, and all possible changes of human emotion must be merged in the divine rapture of worship. We find here only one drawing attributed to his hand: a careful study of the head of a youth, executed with extreme care and exquisite finish. Of other members of the early Florentine School the examples are few. Mr. Russell sends an admirable study, by Donatello, and two highly-finished pen drawings, by Benozzo

Gozzoli. From the same collection there comes also a figure of St. Catherine, ascribed, and with entire probability, to Giotto himself. It is interesting to compare this drawing with another belonging to the same period, where the mode of execution is entirely distinct.

To pass from Florence to Venice is suddenly to exchange a world of ideas for the overpowering allurements of a magnificent reality. The contrast of style, of invention, and of workmanship, is absolute and complete; and when the art of the two cities had reached maturity even the genius of Tintoret was powerless to effect an alliance. But there was one great painter of the north, born in an earlier time, whose influence served for a while to check the growing elements of separation. Andrea Mantegna, by the force of his imagination, claims kinship with Florence, and his connection with the Bellini, although it did not change the destinies of the School, left upon Venetian painting the impress of a serious

style, by which the pursuit of realism was long chastened and controlled. That seductive charm of sensuous beauty to which the painters of Venice afterwards yielded themselves was partly restrained by the austere dignity of his design, wherein nature was studied with another purpose and a different result. With what result the drawings collected in the Grosvenor Gallery amply serve to show, for there is scarcely any of the varied aspects of his genius that they do not illustrate with admirable completeness and effect.

And Mantegna's genius may, in a special sense, be called many-sided. Of all the painters of his epoch he most clearly perceived the separate worth of the several elements out of which the art of the Renaissance was gradually shaping itself. No one of the time could boast a stronger devotion to the beauty of the antique, and no one certainly so well understood how its teaching could be made of living influence. He not only patiently studied such monuments of sculpture as came within his reach, but pene-

trated to the spirit that had controlled the ancient artists in their labour, and carried away the deepest secrets of their style. The "Design for a Fountain," lent by the Earl of Warwick, shows how great was the reward that came as the fruit of these researches. The temperate action of this youthful figure, the simple motive that inspires, without disturbing, the rhythmic grace of faultless limbs, and the order of the composition as a whole, with its perfect balance of mass and line, leave an impression that even the finest antique marble could scarcely surpass; while in the type of form, no less than in the face, there dwells a latent energy of passionate life that gives to the work a modern force, and stamps it with the individuality of the artist. Elsewhere Mantegna has proved that he could depart from this classic serenity of bearing, to sound the depths of human feeling, and exhibit the various phases of human character. In the present collection are to be found two drawings illustrative of the legend of Judith and Holofernes. The first, lent by the Duke of Devonshire, is

doubtless the original design engraved, with but slight modifications, by Girolamo Mocetto. On the blade of the sword, which, curiously enough, Mocetto has not introduced into the print, is inscribed, "ANDREAS MANTINIA, MCCCCLXXXII.," and the date is interesting as evidence of the period at which the subject occupied Mantegna's thoughts. The mode of execution, consisting of a tint of lake upon an outline of bistre, occurs in two other drawings by the artist, to be found in the British Museum. The second design, lent by Mr. Malcolm, is only a fragment, but a fragment that we may complete by reference to other collections. It is, in fact, substantially the same composition as that of a study in the Uffizi, repeated again, but with inferior effect, in a drawing in the Louvre. Here Mantegna's invention touches the highest point of tragic intensity, and we may seek in vain throughout the whole range of pictorial art for a more potent embodiment of a great idea. On the face of Judith—speechless, and yet eloquent of the conflicting

thoughts that follow action—there is fixed a look of terror, strangely contrasting with the stolid countenance of the attendant. The deed she had been summoned to accomplish is finished, and the nervous energy of heroic limbs is partly relaxed, but the fingers still close around the sword-hilt, and the hand that has held the murdered head lingers over its last office as though uncertain whether it has parted with its dread burden or no. In such a drawing as this art suffers no loss of grace, and yet all the deepest problems of drama are unfolded. There is no laboured translation of an idea, no forcing of the means of design to satisfy an intellectual conception : brain and hand have worked together in perfect alliance, and the result is of such absolute beauty that we may be content to forget the legend, and yet so strong in its command of passion that we scarcely realise all that is implied in its obedience to the laws of design. But the grandeur of Mantegna's invention, and his sympathy with the spirit of the antique, were not the only links that bound

him to the progressive movement of the Renaissance. The hand that could patiently follow the folds of classic drapery was sometimes impelled by a spirit of unflinching realism that reminds us rather of Dürer than of any other painter of the south. He was not content until he had carried his impressions back to their source in nature to test and confirm their truth, and as a result of this tendency we may observe in his work an occasional ruggedness and inequality, inseparable from the product of a time when art could not yet command the ease that comes of mastery. The "Hercules and Antæus," a composition in which the claims of energy and grace are not entirely reconciled, may be taken to illustrate this inevitable limitation of his powers. On the other hand, a study of a head in profile, lent by Mr. Malcolm, shows how admirably his knowledge of nature could be applied to the purposes of simple portraiture.

A most interesting series of drawings connected with the name of Mantegna is contained in a precious volume belonging to Lady Rose-

bery. These drawings are all executed with the pen on vellum; and although the theme they are intended to illustrate is not easy to decipher, their association cannot be deemed accidental. Relying merely upon the evidence of the designs themselves, it would seem probable that the artist had been commissioned to record the successive incidents of some serious history, with which he has linked, by way of elegant commentary, a number of inventions of purely fanciful character, dealing with the adventures of a race of amorini. The presence of these sporting cupids warrants the surmise that the book may have been prepared as a marriage or birthday gift. That it bears some reference to the theme of love is at least certain, for besides the drawing of "The Death of Orpheus," there is another wherein a reluctant maiden is no less hardly used. On the reverse of each leaf is a head, armed with a helmet of curious and fantastic device, and it is worth remark, that the design of one of these helmets almost exactly corresponds with that which

appears in Leonardo da Vinci's magnificent drawing of an armed warrior from Mr. Malcôlm's collection. Of the history of this remarkable volume—to whom it originally belonged, and by what chance it passed into the hands of Mr. Barker, who sold it to the late Baron Meyer de Rothschild—little would seem to be known. It is mentioned in the Lemmonnier edition of Vasari, by Selvatico, who there takes upon himself to decide that the designs are not by Mantegna. But as the writer had no access to the designs themselves, and was merely judging by the evidence of the engravings of Francesco Novelli, the decision is scarcely entitled to much weight. These engravings by Novelli were published in a volume at Venice in 1795, and in a prefatory note by the artist we learn some few particulars concerning the drawings that are worth recording. Addressing Giambattista de Rubeis, a painter of Udine, Novelli says: "Having obtained them in Padua, where they had lain forgotten for three centuries, you were able to

bring them to light again in the year 1765, and although you knew the value of them was great, friendship was yet more valuable to you, and thus you made a gift of them to my father, who had a passion for art and for the works of the great masters." Novelli further goes on to observe, that according to the opinion of all competent persons who had seen the drawings, the authorship of Mantegna was entirely accepted.

It may be questioned, however, whether modern criticism will be found equally unanimous upon this point. That they bear the stamp of Mantegna's influence is beyond dispute, and that they cannot with probability be assigned to any individual member of his school is no less true. Their author, whoever he may have been, was equally at home in the treatment of the nude, in the rendering of classic drapery, and in the reproduction of the facts of contemporary costume; and we know of no artist working in the Mantegnesque manner, except the master himself, who can be said to have combined these qualities in the measure here

displayed. Mocetto comes nearest to the description; but then Mocetto's execution, as expressed in his engraving, differs very materially from the mode employed in these drawings; and it may be said further that Mocetto scarcely possessed the ease of invention characteristic of the work under notice. As we look at these designs we cannot indeed but be reminded of the frescoes which Mantegna painted at Mantua, where the portraits of the Gonzagas exhibit his power of dealing with the costume of his time, and where he shows a grace in the disposition of little angel figures that cannot be matched in any other example of his work. The connection of Mantua is again suggested by the introduction of one of those dwarfs, for whom the Gonzagas kept a special suite of apartments in their palace. But, in spite of these probabilities, we must still hesitate to give a confident assent to Novelli's conclusions. Taken as a whole, the work, it must be confessed, fails to carry complete conviction. We miss a certain weight and severity of style, which was of the

very essence of Mantegna's genius. There is no sign of immature resource—on the contrary, the handling is manifestly that of an accomplished artist, sure of his aim, and master of his means; but the aim is not inspired by such imaginative force as we should expect from Mantegna, even in his lightest mood; and the means, although wanting nothing of ease or facility, do not quite exhibit his profound knowledge of nature.

The drawings of the Venetians serve to give particular prominence to certain dominant tendencies of their art, that the evidence of painting does not at once or so clearly reveal. The study of landscape, for example, which in its modern sense may be said to have been created at Venice, had not yet been accepted by painters as an independent craft. It still needed the countenance of some subject of religion or history to which its beauties might stand as mere accessory; but in the drawings of the school we are allowed to escape from this control of fashion, and are permitted to observe

the free growth of that idyllic spirit, which forms so important an element in Venetian style. Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle have noted in their life of Titian that throughout all the catalogues of his pictures there occurs only one instance of a work claiming to be a landscape and nothing more. If we possessed any complete catalogue of his drawings we should find it would yield a very different result. Nearly every great collection in Europe is rich in the records of his devotion to the beauties of outward nature, and the examples in the present exhibition would suffice of themselves to establish his claim to rank as the first great artist in landscape whom the world produced. But the tendency so powerfully developed by his genius had its birth in an earlier time. The sketch-book of Jacopo Bellini, now in the possession of the British Museum, affords the most interesting evidence of the author's careful observation of the ways of rustic life. In turning over its leaves we constantly come upon groups of peasants busied about their ordinary occupa-

tions; and although the details of the scene itself are still treated according to a purely conventional pattern, we find at every turn the signs of a growing appreciation of all that gives life to the scene—expressed now in minute studies of animal form, and now in patient rendering of the shapes of picturesque buildings. The work of Giovanni Bellini carries us a step farther. The picture in the National Gallery of “The Death of Peter Martyr,” attributed to his hand, is more remarkable for the beauty of the landscape, where the wood-cutters are at work amid the trees, than for the imaginative force of the tragic incident enacted in the foreground; and there is a drawing bearing his name in the Albertina Gallery, at Vienna, treating exclusively of landscape, and marked by that peculiar mode of execution afterwards adopted by Titian. Among the drawings by Titian himself, however, it is not difficult to distinguish certain well-defined differences of manner that may be taken to correspond with the successive stages of his career. A sketch

belonging to Mr. Russell can almost certainly be assigned to his later time. It is the work, not, of a studious draughtsman, but of a great painter, who seeks, with a few significant lines, perfectly chosen, to suggest the presence of colour, and to indicate the changing and brilliant effects of light and air. It is, in fact, the type of all that is implied in the modern practice of sketching. The slightness and liberty of its method are the natural accompaniments of an art that had come to be more concerned to seize and register the fleeting impression of a scene than to follow with laborious imitation all the intricacies of minute detail. It is this clear perception of the dramatic spirit in nature—the sense of life and movement which the things of the earth take from the empire of the sky—that gives to Titian's genius its modern character and influence. But it becomes very evident by reference to many other drawings here and elsewhere, that he did not suddenly leap to such perfect freedom and individuality of style. The beautiful study of a grove of

trees with a rocky foreground, lent by Mr. Frederick Locker, may be taken as an exquisite specimen of a considerable group of drawings¹ that would seem to date from the opposite limit of his career. Here there is scarcely any effort after aerial effect, but in its stead a most accurate and exhaustive representation of all that the scene contains. Where the first was merely suggestive, the second is complete, and in its reverent and painstaking method there is scarcely any hint of that boldness in selection which the painter afterwards learned to employ. There are certain points in these earlier drawings which suggest that the impulse of the Venetian School towards the study of landscape may have been partly supported by the example of Albert Dürer. The use of a broken or dotted line to indicate the broken surfaces of the foreground occurs repeatedly in Dürer's

¹ Two other drawings, apparently of the same scene from different points of view, are to be found in the Uffizi and at the Albertina Gallery at Vienna. They both exhibit precisely the same qualities of execution that characterise Mr. Locker's drawing.

prints, and would seem to have been adopted by Titian and others who worked with him. By Titian himself it was subsequently abandoned in favour of a freer style of handling. He learned to depend altogether upon sweeping and continuous lines, not at all suggestive of the manner of an engraver, and even in such a careful and precise drawing as the study of a beech-tree also from Mr. Locker's collection, his peculiarly individual method is already established. But when we turn to the interesting example signed by Domenico Campagnola, who was an imitator of Titian, we find this characteristic of Titian's early practice still retained, and the suspicion that it was possibly derived from Dürer is strengthened by the fact that in one of the Campagnola engravings the landscape background is taken bodily from Dürer's print of "The Prodigal Son." Passing for a moment from the landscapes of Titian, it may be of interest to note one or two drawings by Venetian painters connected with well-known pictures. An admirable sketch

for the figure of the falling horseman in the lost picture of "The Battle of Cadore" will be found sufficiently described in the body of the Catalogue. It is placed beside a complete design of the entire composition which bears less convincing stamp of authenticity. Sketches connected with the celebrated picture of the "Peter Martyr" are contributed by Mr. Malcolm, by Mr. William Russell, and by the Duke of Devonshire. The last is assigned to Giorgione, but there is good reason for the belief that it is in reality the work of Il Pordenone. Ridolfi relates that Titian competed for the commission to paint the picture with Palma Vecchio and Il Pordenone, and that when the designs were presented that of Titian was preferred. In the gallery of the Uffizi there exists a finished drawing by Il Pordenone, which we may assume to have been the original submitted for the approval of the judges, and the principal figures in that drawing exactly correspond with the figures in the sketch from Chatsworth. Mr. Frederick Locker sends an

admirable sketch for one of the frescoes executed by Titian with the help of Campagnola, in the Scuola di Sant' Antonio at Padua. The latest biographers of the master speak of the fresco as being far inferior to this sketch, laying all the defects of the former to the helping hand of Campagnola. And yet we need not feel any surprise at the association of these two men, for as Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle have justly observed, Campagnola was one of the few artists of the time who shared Titian's devotion to landscape, and who practised landscape painting "as an art relying altogether upon itself." How this reliance was justified in the event we may see by the series of superb pen drawings of Canaletto, which may be said to close the history of the Venetian School.

In this brief review we have done little more than glance at a single aspect of the many-sided art of Venice, and it would have been no less interesting, had space permitted, to trace the gradual development of portraiture, in which again the supremacy of Titian's genius so

powerfully asserted itself. In all the schools of Europe that have arisen since his time, these two departments—of landscape and portrait—have claimed independent existence, and it is partly by her anticipation of their future importance that Venice stands as the source of modern painting. Her splendid practice, based upon a new sense of the value of vivid imitation of nature, became the accepted model for all future generations of painters. As we leave Italy for the North, we meet at every turn the witness of her enduring influence. Rubens, Vandyck, Rembrandt, Frank Hals, Reynolds, and Gainsborough, all these names, which are the foremost names in the art of their respective countries, represent a movement in painting that owes something to Venice but nothing to Florence. It was in vain that Rubens copied the designs of Michelangelo, for the aims and the resources of the two men lay as far as the poles asunder; in vain also that our own Sir Joshua recommended the study of the great Florentine in his lectures, while he proclaimed in his work the absolute

dominion of Venice. But it is no part of our present purpose, even if it lay within our power, to follow in detail the growth of these great northern schools. We have lingered too long over the drawings of the Italians; nor, indeed, would it in any case have been possible within the limits of a single essay to exhaust the various points of interest which such a collection is able to suggest. The art of Germany alone would demand a separate study; for of the two great masters of Germany, the representation is here ample in extent and of superb quality. Neither Dürer nor Holbein escaped the influence of Italy, and yet both reveal in their work a genius distinctively national and entirely independent. Dürer indeed holds a place in the history of art that is absolutely unique. Impelled by a spirit of realism so searching that by comparison the realism of Venice seems almost superficial, and yet at the same time endowed with an imaginative temper that Florence could not surpass, he created a style of his own, altogether distinct and yet scarcely inferior to either. By the

relentless force of his portraiture he claims kinship with Holbein, but with this fidelity to nature there is interwoven so much of profound symbolism, that even the simplest study from his hand seems to contain something more than the mere exact record of fact. It is not alone in those strange inventions which he has left as a riddle to the world that we recognise the presence of a powerful individuality, for the most familiar scene, as it passes into the realm of his art, assumes an air of unaccustomed mystery. The allegorical design from the royal collection is an admirable example of Dürer's use of deliberate symbolism, and the precise significance of this curious composition it is perhaps impossible now to decipher. The late Mr. Woodward in his book on the Windsor drawings made an unsuccessful effort to explain the puzzle, but the more recent researches of Professor Thausing serve effectually to destroy his rather fanciful fabric of conjecture. Professor Thausing does not affect to offer a complete account of Dürer's purpose in the design, but

he can at least claim the credit of having thrown some new light upon the words "PUPILA AUGUSTA," which are inscribed on a scroll in the right-hand corner. This inscription, it may be observed, is in a different ink from that used in the drawing itself, and is supposed by Professor Thausing to have been added with the date, 1516, some years afterwards. The monogram he pronounces to be genuine, and to belong to the year 1500, when, as he assumes, the drawing was executed. He points out further, that the town upon the hill in the background is in fact a view of Nuremburg from the west, and he reminds us that it is almost identical with the background introduced into the engraving of St. Anthony, dated 1519, and with a part of the landscape used by Dürer in a picture painted in 1506 for the German merchants at Venice. The connection of Nuremburg suggests the explanation of the words already quoted. Turning to the writings of Conrad Celtes, the friend of Dürer, he finds a poetical invitation addressed to Apollo to come from Italy to

Germany. Literature as well as art was inspired by an enthusiasm for classical antiquity, and under the guidance of this enthusiasm it was sought to find for Nuremburg some title which should endow it with a classical existence. By the Humanists it was sometimes called *Urbs Noricorun*, and Dürer was fond of calling himself *Noricus*. But the province of *Noricum* was in reality far away from Nuremburg, and *Celtes*, who possessed the *Itinerary* of the Emperor Antoninus, found there a Roman colony, *Augusta Prætoria*, which name he chose to adopt as the title for Nuremburg, although here again the topography was still far from being exact. "If now," continues Professor Thausing, "we return with the light thus won to Dürer's drawing, although it does not prove sufficient to solve all the riddles of the design, this much becomes clear :—that we have here to do with an allegorical and mythological apotheosis of Nuremburg. Perhaps the design was intended for a frontispiece to *Celtes*' description of Nuremburg, and was abandoned because

a simple view of the city was accepted as sufficient ; and if we remember in what respect and honour Conrad Celtes was held in the circle of Humanists of Nuremburg, and that he was in fact the discoverer and father of the Augusta Prætoria, it becomes at least possible that after his death, which happened on the 5th February 1508, at Vienna, some one of his followers in Nuremburg may have added the words *Pupila Augusta*. If this were contemporary with the date, 1516, inscribed below, it was a last Humanistic cry of woe before the dawn of the Reformation."

To this interesting record of Professor Thausing's researches we may be permitted to add one fact that rather tends to support the conclusion at which he has arrived. The three figures borne upon the dolphin's back across the rippling water, whom the aged woman seated to the left of the composition seems to be welcoming to Nuremburg, may perhaps be designed to represent the three graces persuaded by the two-fold power of art and literature to seek a home in Germany. And if so, they are

in a double sense the gift of Italy ; for it happens that we have here an instance of Dürer's readiness to borrow from the work of others what he needed for his own design. Among the early engravings of the North Italian School there is a print (B. xiii. 351) representing a Bacchante, and on the base of the pedestal, upon which the figure is placed, there occurs the precise design which Dürer has embodied in his drawing. On remarking the coincidence to Mr. Reid, the keeper of the prints and drawings at the British Museum, he remembered that the same design was also to be found among the *nielli* prints (Duchesne 303); and in this earlier version, therefore, we have undoubtedly the source from which both the Italian engraver and Dürer took their suggestion. There is one other point connected with the drawing that deserves remark. It seems to have been generally regarded as a design made in preparation for engraving, and intended to be reversed, and the reversed signature and inscription have been cited as evidence of the artist's intention ; but the more important

portions of the drawing, it may be observed, do not support this conjecture. The three figures taken from the Italian engraving are not reversed, nor is it easy to believe that Dürer would have been willing to transform the action of these figures from the right hand to the left. Following Professor Thausing's conjecture, however, we may perhaps assume that the friend who added the inscription may have been the first to entertain the thought of transferring the design to the copper. A second example of Dürer, deserving special notice, is from the collection of Mr. William Mitchell, who has contributed to the exhibition a most interesting series of German drawings. It represents the figure of an angel playing on a guitar, executed in silver point, with a delicacy and perfection of style that no process can hope to render completely. Mr. Mitchell also contributes, among other valuable studies of the German school, a portrait by Dürer of Lord de Morley, who was sent to Nuremburg by King Henry VIII. as one of the special ambassadors to invest Don Ferdinando, Arch-

duke of Austria, with the order of the Garter. This is not the only interesting specimen of the artist's power of portraiture to be found in the exhibition. Mr. Locker lends a very beautiful head in silver point; and the Earl of Warwick a portrait of Lucas Van Leyden, about which much has already been said by M. Ephrussi and Professor Colvin. From them we learn that it is the original drawing for the portrait engraved by Lucas Van Leyden himself in 1525, and that some former owner of the drawing, knowing the engraving, thought to increase the value of his possession by erasing the signature of Albert Dürer and substituting that of Lucas Van Leyden. Among other examples of northern art in the exhibition are a portrait study of extreme delicacy in execution by Jan Van Eyck, and a selection from the series of Holbein's works belonging to her Majesty, including the admirable head of Sir Harry Guldeford. In not a few instances the artist's original design would seem to have been touched upon by some later hand, but of such retouching there can here

be no suspicion. The drawing by Van Eyck is lent by Mr. Mitchell, and is assuredly one of the most beautiful examples in existence of the school and the period to which it belongs.¹

¹ I am indebted to Dr. Richter for the following interesting note upon this drawing :—"The person represented, with his very characteristic features, is identical with a portrait in the Museum of Antwerp, attributed to Roger Van der Weyden, and declared to be the portrait of Philippe-le-Bon, Duke of Burgundy (see *Catalogue du Musée d'Anvers*, 1874, p. 445.) The Antwerp painting was engraved by Louys, in continuation of the series of portraits of the Dukes and Duchesses of Burgundy, by Jonas Suyderhof. It differs from the design belonging to Mr. Mitchell in some details of costume, and also in the fact that the head is turned a little to the left. Concerning the attribution of the drawing to Jan Van Eyck, there exists no such chronological difficulty as would arise in the case of the painting, where the Duke is certainly represented as more advanced in years. Philippe-le-Bon died in 1467, aged seventy-two, and he was therefore forty-six years old at the time of the death of Van Eyck, who from the year 1425 lived with the Prince on the terms of the closest intimacy. The drawing would seem to represent a man of upwards of forty years of age, and we may therefore class this masterpiece among the latest works of Jan Van Eyck."

II.

JAMES BARRY.

IN the summer of the year 1788 a young Irish artist arrived in London, bearing a letter of introduction to James Barry. At that time Barry had accomplished the great work of his life. The pictures which hang round the walls of the Society of Arts, and which are justly reckoned as the highest effort of his genius, had been completed in 1783. In the previous year he had been appointed professor of painting in the Royal Academy, and his exercise of the functions of this office had not yet led to the series of unhappy and unfortunate disputes which terminated at last in his expulsion. Barry may, therefore, be said to have been in the full enjoyment of his fame. The youth who came to seek his

friendship was, on the contrary, only just entering upon his career. Martin Archer Shee was destined to rise to the highest dignity in his profession. Forty years later he became president of the Royal Academy ; and the courtly manner in which he discharged the duties of his position tends, perhaps, as much as his purely artistic gifts, to the permanence of his fame.

We may assume that he already possessed some of those essential qualifications for success which Barry had always lacked. Indeed, his biographer assures us that even at this early age the young man's manners were regulated by "the highest standard of social propriety which the circles of Dublin afforded," and that such was his punctilious exactness in matters pertaining to the toilette, that, in common with most of the men of fashion of his time, he passed an hour every day under the care of his hairdresser. It is impossible to conceive of a more striking contrast than is presented between this elegant youth and the morose and solitary artist ; and it is easy to imagine the shock which such a polished young

gentleman must have experienced on his first introduction to Barry in his poor and lonely lodging. Writing home to his brother immediately after his visit, Shee preserves for us this lively picture of the artist and his surroundings. "Conceive," he says, "a little ordinary man, not in the most graceful dishabille, a dirty shirt without any cravat, his neck open, and a tolerable length of beard, his stockings not of the purest white in the world, hanging about his heels, sitting at a small table in the midst of this artificial confusion, etching a plate from one of his own designs." And of the apartment itself he continues in the same strain. "The floor," he tells us, "seemed never to have experienced the luxury of an application of soap and water. The centre of it was covered by a carpet, the colour of which might once have been discoverable, but, from its intimate connection with dust and dirty feet, had long since ceased to be distinguishable from the more exposed part of the flooring." "The walls," he adds, "were perfectly concealed by an innumerable quantity of little

statues, busts, and old pictures, besides casts of legs, arms, skulls, bones, hands, feet, sketches, prints, drawings, palettes, pencils, colours, canvases, frames, and every other implement calculated for the use of art, disposed in all the confusion and disorder of the most negligent carelessness."

There is something eminently suggestive in the meeting of these two men: the one young and confident, gifted with the social qualities that ensured the sympathy of the world, and attached to a branch of art which at that time offered the only safe road to wealth and fame; the other, not yet old in years, it is true, but already arrived at the limit of his hope and ambition, cursed with a nature that had left him almost without friends and wholly without patrons, disappointed in the pursuit of a kind of art that was strange to the temper of his time, yet still resolute in the labour he had undertaken, and steadfast to the last in the faith with which he had entered upon his career. Twenty years had passed since Barry himself had come, like

Shee, to try his fortunes in London, and now, although he had still many years to live, his career was practically ended. In spite of the bright hopes of the lad himself, and of the friends who had recognised and encouraged his earlier efforts, that career had been a failure. I have said he was just then in the full enjoyment of his fame, but, in truth, he never really won the sympathy of his generation, and his fame brought with it but small earthly reward. In this very year he was pleading with the Duke of Richmond for a place in the Ordnance Department, in order that he might find case and time to produce something worthy of the eighteenth century. He was straitened in circumstances, and embittered by the sense of his isolation and the imperfect recognition of his fellows. But this was not all. If Barry had only missed the appreciation of his time, it would be indeed a pleasant task for us of a later day to review the hardships of his life, to mark the noble aim which he ever kept before him, to recall his extraordinary resolution and self-denial, and to

welcome as our inheritance the great results he achieved. Unhappily, however, Barry's failure was within as well as without. The embittered circumstances of his life have for us an extra note of pain, for the reason that we cannot rate at the value he set upon them the works that he spent his strength in producing. We cannot but perceive, looking back after this lapse of time, that between the grandeur of his conceptions, and the shapes in which they were expressed, there is a gap such as he did not dream of. I do not mean to deny the admirable qualities of Barry's work; I am well aware of the difficulties under which he laboured, and I am anxious to recognise, at its full value, the extraordinary courage with which he imagined and carried to completion the most extended experiment in decorative design which has yet been produced in this country. That, without any national tradition to guide him, and without the encouragement of contemporary examples, he should have executed the vast canvases possessed by the Society of Arts, proves, I think, that Barry possessed real power

as well as a noble ambition. And yet, when all has been said that justice demands, there must still remain, I think, a painful conviction of Barry's failure. We may admit that he was not rightly understood by his age, but we must also acknowledge that he did not truly understand the kind of beauty in art which he desired to express. Of the dead, we are told, we should say nothing which is not good. It is a poor saying, for the dead of all men most sternly reject insincerity of praise, and it is no injustice to Barry's memory to distinguish truly the inherent limitation of his powers. Rather it may be said, that the sense of his failure gives a peculiar pathos to the record of his career. It is impossible not to be touched by the picture of this man, who, from boyhood, had denied himself all luxury and relaxation ; who lived upon the most frugal fare, and amid the simplest surroundings, in order that he might the better carry out the great and noble designs which he entertained for the advancement of our English School. And our sympathies with his labour

and with his fate are only quickened by the thought that, to some extent, he laboured in vain ; for the failure of which we have spoken was, in a measure, independent of individual will or power. If we consider carefully Barry's position in the history of our school, we shall see that, although his want of success was partly due to the temper of the man and the quality of his genius, yet that it was, in a deeper and truer sense, to be ascribed to the temper of his time, and to the general conditions under which painting had been practised in Europe. Other men might have won greater applause and a larger share of popular homage ; no man, whatever his disposition, could have hoped, at that time, for absolute success in the realm of art which Barry sought to inhabit ; and it therefore becomes a question of peculiar interest to consider what there was in the spirit of the age, and in the general condition of the art, to shut out the members of our English School from the highest triumphs of imaginative design.

For the causes of that strange isolation in which he passed his life we must indeed look to the facts of his character. Barry, even in his boyhood, showed an inclination to separate himself from his fellows. Born at Cork, in the year 1741, he was at first destined for his father's business of a coasting trader; but he quickly discovered a talent for design, and while he was still at school, he entered upon an independent course of study, and rarely mixed in the ordinary boyish games or amusements. While others were at play, he would steal off to his room and set to work with his pencil, or busy himself in the reading of some book that he had borrowed or bought. He used to alarm his mother by sitting up all night at his work, and when they strove to force him to rest, he would lock his door, and allow no one to enter his room, not even for the purpose of making up his bed. When he was scarcely twenty, he began a picture of St. Patrick landing on the coast of Cashel, and with this first trial of his strength he journeyed to Dublin, where he arrived just in time

to have the work displayed in the exhibition of the Society. Here it attracted the notice of Mr. Burke, and thus there began, between the statesman and the painter, a friendship that endured for many years, and the records of which offer almost the only means we possess of following the after course of Barry's career. There is something wholly delightful in the earlier relations of these two men, and it is almost pitiful to note, in later years, how Burke's protecting kindness and wise anxiety for the painter's future grew, by degrees, more reticent in expression as the fiercer elements of Barry's character developed, and his wayward independence of temperament began to assert itself. With Burke's family Barry crossed to England, and mainly through Burke's generosity he was enabled soon after to set out for Rome. But a little before, he seems to have almost despaired of ever reaching this long-desired goal. "I am still," he writes to a friend in Cork, "at work for Mr. Stewart, and not likely to think of anything else, God knows how long, having weaned myself as

much as possible from the thought of going to Italy, which has already been attended with too much disappointment and vexation." Barry's letters, describing the experiences of his journey to Rome, are full of the most sincere expressions of gratitude for his patron's kindness, and the tone of Burke's replies proves that he too entertained a real affection for the young painter. "I love you, and I esteem you," he writes, "and I wish your welfare and your credit as much as any man." To preserve during all the years of their intercourse this kindliness of feeling must often have been to Burke a matter of difficulty and trial. Not that Barry was at any time indifferent to the value of the friendship that subsisted between them, or disposed to underrate the great benefits which it had conferred upon him, but he could not, at all times, govern his temper; he was apt to let slight and trivial disagreements obscure the memory of a noble friendship, so that there came at last a time when Burke, instead of beginning his letters with the familiar words, "My dear Barry,"

came at last to adopt the chilling form of "presenting his compliments" to the solitary artist. But in these earlier days Burke shows no sign of sensitiveness in his own person; all his anxiety is for Barry's future, and for the evil that he will bring upon himself, unless he can learn to bear with his fellow-men, and to keep his mind in tranquillity for his work. Barry had already made himself unpopular with the artists in Rome by seeking, with too much candour, to expose the tricks and frauds of the dealers in antiquity that haunted the city. Reynolds, who took a genuine interest in the young Irishman's career, is called in to give advice. Burke adds some of his own to the same effect. The wrathful and irascible student is warned by both against being led away from his own concerns by the malice and envy of others. He is advised to let these pretty tricksters go their own way instead of quarrelling with them. "There is," says Burke, "no living in the world upon any other terms." These small incidents in Barry's sojourn at Rome would be scarcely worth quoting, save for the

indication they afford us of the morbid element in his character. In a letter written during the latter part of his stay abroad, we get the first hint of that deep strain of melancholy and mistrust which was so strangely combined with his arrogance and irritability. Speaking of his approaching return, he writes in a desponding fashion of the taste of his countrymen. "Oh, I could be happy," he cries, "on my going home to find some corner where I could sit down in the middle of my studies, books, and casts after the antique, to paint this work and others; where I might have models of nature when necessary, bread and soup, and a coat to cover me. I should care not what became of my work when it was done, but I reflect with horror upon such a fellow as I am, and with such a kind of art in London, with house rent to pay, duns to follow me, and employers to look for." It is not to be thought that such an utterance as this was only the feeble expression of youthful enthusiasm. His whole life proved that Barry was ready and willing to make any

sacrifice for his art ; and there is in all the history of art , no more notable instances of absolute devotion to an ideal, a devotion which, in regard to material concerns, made no claim upon the indulgence or forbearance of others. Those who came in contact with Barry had assuredly much to bear from his perverse and ungovernable disposition ; but it is at least a noble trait in his character, that he duly counted the cost of each adventure he was to make, that he did not seek to shift his burdens on to other shoulders, and that the full extent of his failure fell chiefly in hardships inflicted upon himself. At the time that he undertook the decoration of the Society of Arts he had, so his biographer tells us, but sixteen shillings in his pocket ; and during the execution of these vast canvases, he was constantly compelled, after his day's work was done, to employ himself in the evenings on drawings and etchings for the publishers. Barry's arrangement with the Society was that he should paint these pictures at his own risk, the Society only undertaking to provide

the materials, and to hand over to him the receipts arising from their public exhibition. Barry never flinched from the labour; but he must, at times, have looked forward with something like dismay to his means of livelihood during the progress of the work. In such a mood it must have been that he penned a letter to Sir George Saville, one of the vice-presidents of the Society, asking that gentleman to head a subscription in order to give the painter command of £100 a year. There is no record of any practical issue to his appeal, but to me, I confess, there is a simple dignity in this letter, which aptly accords with the proved integrity of the man. "My request and wish," he says, "is that you, sir, would subscribe £20 or £10 yourself, and prevail with such of the Society as you think proper to subscribe also, to make in the whole the annual sum of £100, to be given me monthly or quarterly, as the work goes on. I shall, by that means, be enabled to give myself up entirely to it until it be finished, which, with God's blessing, will be in about two years;

and then the sum of £200, which I shall have received, shall be paid back to you and to those other public-spirited gentlemen who lent it to me. If the exhibition produces nothing, or that the Society should neglect to make one, you will then lose your money; but a public work will be completed, and I shall be happy; as the opportunity of throwing myself out in such a work will be, to me, a reward fully sufficient."

This frank appeal seems to me wholly worthy of the man, and of the generous spirit in which he had undertaken this great work for the Society. That he was partly impelled by personal ambition is, no doubt, true enough. What artist is there who does not feel and acknowledge the desire of fame? But he was quite as powerfully urged to the undertaking by a truly noble desire to establish in the English School a tradition of monumental design. He had been disgusted and enraged by the failure in the previous year of the scheme for the decoration of St. Paul's; and when Reynolds

and the other members of the Academy declined the invitation of the Society to decorate their room, he came forward with alacrity and took the labour altogether upon himself. It would be easy to multiply instances bearing witness to the finer side of Barry's character; but, alas! it was not always easy for those who were his contemporaries to do justice to the grandeur of his ideas. His most generous schemes, devised for the advancement of English art, were so complicated by the violence of his temper, and by an ungenerous mistrust and suspicion of his fellows, that we are not to be surprised if he sometimes, during his career, received less than his due share of praise. His quarrel with the Academy brings prominently before us both the best and worst sides of the man's nature. The employment of the professorial chair for personal attacks upon his brother Academicians must have been intolerable to them, and I can understand that they should justly decide to deprive him of his office; but I do not understand, nor do I think any just mind can now defend, the

course which they took in expelling him from the society. I cannot forget, for my own part, that Barry was not merely an intemperate lecturer, but that he was, at the same time, an enlightened and persistent advocate of reform. He incurred the displeasure of the Royal Academy, not only for his personal arrogance, but because he urged upon that body a large and liberal conception of their duty towards the public, which met with stubborn and dogged resistance from the majority of its members. If the Royal Academy had followed the lines of policy which Barry laid down, it would now be occupying a very different and a more dignified place in the esteem of the nation, and of the general body of artists. We cannot conceive of such an institution as Barry contemplated ever claiming, as the Academy once claimed, to be a private society independent of national control.

When we turn from Barry's character to Barry's art, we get upon less disputable ground. I shall not attempt, with any fulness of detail,

either to expound the merits or to mark the defects of Barry's painting. His most important work is still to be seen at the Society of Arts, and I scarcely think it likely that there is in our time room for much dispute as to the intrinsic value of the result. Whatever praise may now be accorded to his talent would go but a little way towards satisfying the claims that were at one time put forward on his behalf. His indulgent biographer contrasts his genius with that of Raphael, not altogether to Raphael's advantage; and Barry himself, I think, believed that he had established a style combining the noblest qualities of the antique with the chosen excellence of the greatest of the Italians. Looking back with that cruel clearness of vision which comes with lapse of time, we can perceive the absolute insecurity of these pretensions. We are able to recognise that such art as this could not, in its nature, be a full or satisfying expression of the mind of its epoch. The failure, as we have already observed, was in this sense not Barry's alone; as he was among the first, so also

he was in the same respect the greatest of those who laboured in vain. But the classical sentiment dominating his style, and which pervaded all the art of the eighteenth century, that strove for the embodiment of imaginative ideas, was in two ways absolutely fatal to the production of any work of real and full vitality. For in the first place it must be remembered that the conception of the antique world which then governed men's minds was in its essence a dead and paralysing conception. The formulá which pedantic criticism and the fashion of the time had combined to force upon the world was such as by no ingenuity could be made to express the movement, the passion, and the variety of human life. Men who swore obedience to such a straitened ideal were compelled even against their will to falter in their devotion to nature, and to rigidly exclude from their sympathies the feelings and sentiments of their age. Even a genius so true and so refined as Flaxman's could not wholly escape from the mark of this fashion. He was so far restrained by the

prevailing spirit that he could only reconstruct the classic ideal within the limits of a domestic existence. So often as he ventured into a wider realm, so often do his works bear the impress of reverent learning rather than of individual power. He could not express, through classic forms, the presence of the modern spirit; he had not the strength which could forge the link to bind the old with the new, and if we compare his transcript of Greek art with that which had been made by the masters of the Renaissance, we shall have to confess that, although it bears externally the marks of a greater fidelity to the past, it has not an equal sympathy to attach itself to the realities of a present world.

If we can recognise this limitation in the noblest sculpture of the time, how much more strongly must it impress itself upon the products of an art whose resources imperatively demand vividness of realisation, and whose effects are therefore forced into closer comparison with the facts of nature. Painting, of all the many forms

of artistic expression, can the least afford to accept a convention which seeks to exclude from its view the energy and passion of actual life; and, in yielding to such an influence, it must inevitably take refuge in the nerveless grandeur of Barry's colossal style, or sink into the pretty insipidities of a Cipriani or a Kauffman. But this devotion to a false and limited idea of antique grace was not merely a source of weakness in itself; it served no less to deprive the painters of the eighteenth century of the full benefit they might have derived from the teaching and example of the great masters of the past. Few artists of his age could boast of a wider and more generous appreciation of Italian art than was possessed by Barry. His letters from Rome, and his notes upon the paintings and sculpture in Venice and Florence, prove that he understood, with a justice and discrimination that were rare in his day, the several stages in the advancement of the art, from Giotto to Michelangelo. He never assuredly made a better use of his fiery and impetuous temper than when

he boldly lectured the monks at Milan upon their folly in repainting the "Last Supper" of Leonardo; and the energy of his discourse on that occasion would, I think, almost suffice to strike terror into the heart of a modern restorer. But, in spite of Barry's real enthusiasm for the painters of the Renaissance, it is easy to perceive that he was constantly testing their work by reference to the standard of the antique. He did not study or accept them, in the sense in which they have since been studied and accepted, as the instruments of a great imaginative impulse, whose individuality was stamped not less upon the method than upon the essence of their art; he chose rather to measure his praise of their genius according as he found they approached in their work to the correctness and proportion of ancient sculpture. Such a process of investigation could not be expected to reach the real spirit of Italian art. It was conducted by men who were intellectually already pledged to an impoverished ideal, which a pedantic criticism had chosen to graft upon antiquity, and who,

therefore, discovered that Raphael and Michelangelo had little to teach which could not be better acquired from the surviving records of the art of Greece and Rome. There was, indeed, one man in England who possessed a keener insight into the great imaginative design of Florence, and better understood the uses of its example. The genius of Blake shot a momentary radiance across the dull sky, which others could not penetrate at all, and then sank downward, with no sure footing to tread the earth. He had the vision which showed him how great a thing painting had been when it stood as the mirror of men's highest imaginings, and he was quick to perceive the extent of the change that was needed before English painting could hope to undertake this difficult duty. But he must be judged as a seer rather than as an artist, for he had no strength sufficient to effect the revolution he so ardently desired ; and while he failed through lack of practical power, others who were, like Barry, more perfectly equipped, failed no less from the lack of that

intensity of imagination which in Blake was developed to the point of disease.

The defects that might be anticipated from this superstitious devotion to classic style, with its consequent misapprehension of the greatness of Italian design, are easily traceable in the works of Barry. We are struck at once, in looking at his pictures, with the want of individuality, not merely in the features but in the forms, with the lack of passion and character in the faces, with the absence of expressive energy in the movement of the limbs. The action is either tame or exaggerated; the figures, even where the scale is colossal, are wanting in grandeur and dignity, and, at first sight, these things are more surprising, seeing that there existed at this time another kind of art which would specially tend to the development of the very qualities we miss. It is a remarkable phenomenon that the efforts of men like Barry, and West, and Haydon, were contemporary with a series of the most brilliant triumphs in the practice of portraiture; and nothing shows

more conclusively the insecure basis of the so-called ideal art of the period than its rigid and determined exclusion of all those qualities which make portraiture interesting. The comparison of two men like Barry and Reynolds must now be fatal to the pretensions of the former. Nor is this dependent merely upon difference of individual genius. If Reynolds had undertaken the task that Barry attempted, he too would have failed in a greater or less degree, and it remains for us to consider, as one of the most interesting problems connected with art history, in what manner the gradual progress of painting in England and in Europe had led to the decay of imaginative design, and to the assured supremacy of the departments of portrait, landscape, and the realistic illustration of contemporary manners. Looking first to England, we may see that the force of the Reformation, whatever may have been the gains in a spiritual sense, had unquestionably the effect of suddenly snapping the artistic tradition. It is not to be said that, even under more fortunate conditions, our

early English painters could ever, by their independent effort, have so enlarged the capabilities of their art as to render it fit to compete with that of other nations, but it is nevertheless true that, up to the time of the Reformation, English painting had a real existence ; and if we go back to a still earlier date, we shall discover a period when the work of illuminated English manuscripts was the most perfect in Europe. If, then, the Reformation, with the Puritan movement by which it was followed, had not entirely depressed the artistic spirit, the successive revolutions of style, which were deferred till the next century, might have more rapidly completed themselves, and the English School, as we now know it, would have had an earlier birth. But, when the Reformation came, the imaginative impulse was turned into a different channel. The force of the Protestant feeling expended itself in denunciation of the ornate luxury by which the earlier ritual had been surrounded, and, in the condemnation of Romish doctrine and practice, it was inevitable that all the outward

graces of life, and the arts by which they were sustained, should be temporarily discouraged. Imagination, escaping from the control of the Church, and seeking for itself a freer realm, became, by a strange irony of fate, one of the strongest elements of opposition to the art which, of all others, most imperatively needs imagination; and the artist, thus deprived of the sympathies of those who led the new movement of ideas, made scarce any effort to keep pace with the intellectual development of the time. All the strength of our Renaissance found expression in our literature, and we are left to guess who, among the earlier poets of our school, might, under different conditions of national life, have become great imaginative painters. I know not if it is only a fancy, but I have sometimes thought that in the author of the "Fairy Queen" there dwelt the soul of a painter; and in the precise and ordered pattern of his verse, so richly and so lovingly adorned with the description of all that might give delight to the eye, we have enshrined a series of

visions that might, under other conditions, have found their way on to fresco or canvas. But it is only in the earlier stages of our literature that we are permitted to indulge such fancies, for soon the poet became also the dramatist ; and the drama, while it is the highest expression of the literary spirit, serves also most clearly to assert the distinctions between the modes of literature and art.

Seeing, then, how completely literature had absorbed the national energies, it is not surprising to find that the after-growth of art in England is due to a foreign source. In the minds and in the homes of the cultivated classes the taste for art survived, and we had great collectors and connoisseurs before we could boast of great artists. Even before the Reformation had left its mark upon the English spirit, Holbein had found a home at the English Court, and when the work of the Reformation was complete, or nearly complete, Rubens, and his great pupil, Vandyck, were invited to our shores. At first sight, indeed, it may seem

strange that the residence among us of these great masters of the craft did not avail, at once, to establish the tradition of imaginative design, but the solution of this riddle is to be sought as well in the nature of the art of which these men were the professors as in that determined impulse towards literature of which we have already taken account.

When Vandyck entered upon his career, painting, it must be remembered, was no longer fit to undertake the expression of the higher problems of the spirit. In the hands of Rubens himself, art had already reached and surpassed the utmost limits of artistic license. The force, no less than the failure, of his invention put an end for a while to all further study of imaginative design, and the fallacious splendour of his most ambitious achievement was more than enough to drive other artists of less gift or of greater refinement into a narrower realm. To realise the decadence in the spiritual elements of painting that had been effected by the time Rubens' career was complete, it is only neces-

sary to refer to his own copy of Mantegna, in the National Gallery, and to compare it with the original cartoon at Hampton Court. As we stand before the brilliant essay of this matchless master of the brush, we have to confess to ourselves that one great epoch in ideal art was closed when gods and goddesses descended to take upon themselves the ample flesh of Flemish men and women. Rubens himself was passionately attracted by the noble inventions of the great masters of Italy, and, with his unapproachable talent, he, if any man, could have revived and sustained the tradition they had established. He had lovingly copied their paintings, and studied their drawings; he had passed from Venice to Florence, reaping, as he went, all the harvest that was still left upon the field; and yet, as often as he tries to emulate these earlier triumphs, so often does he assert, with all the frankness of his genius, that their empire had ended, and that art had entered upon a new career.

It is no part of our task to follow the

growth or to note the decay of the imaginative schools of Italy, and we have no right to linger over those noble aims in painting which Giotto had furnished, and to the fulfilment of which the mighty genius of Michelangelo was finally summoned. All that we have to observe is, that painting in the hands of such a race of gifted artists as the world never before had seen, and, perhaps, never will see again, was at last so raised in dignity and power, that the world itself and all the fortunes of humanity became reflected in the shapes of its creation. Starting with the duty of illustrating the legends of the Christian faith, these men of Florence had so deeply penetrated the secrets of nature as to be led at last to recognise, with the delight of new discovery, the charm and power of the antique; and then, advancing with the models of the antique to guide them, and with the strength of their own impulse to save them from the pedantries of mere imitation, they were able to create a style for themselves, large enough to express all the aspirations, the fears,

and the fate of humanity, and simple enough to keep its hold to the end upon the truth and simplicity of nature. But, with the death of Michelangelo, the bright day of Florentine art passed swiftly away into darkness, and we have to look elsewhere for the growth of those elements that still kept their vitality when they were transported into the practice of the schools of Northern Europe.

Venice, for a while, and in her earlier days, had pursued, with Florence, the study of spiritual truth, and, so long as the name of Mantegna remained as a power at Venice, the products of the school kept about them something of their primitive force. We may recognise the influence of Mantegna's genius while Titian was still in his youth and early manhood, but Titian, with a career that extended to the verge of a century, lived to witness, and partly to effect, the first changes in a revolution that was destined to colour the art-work of all succeeding generations. Of a genius too great and sincere to labour in the service of an expiring tradition, and too

youthful in spirit, even to the close of his long life, not to feel and to accept the new influences that were asserting themselves, Titian, in his own painting, already presents to us some of those elements that have been found so fruitful in the work of later schools. It was he (as his latest biographers have reminded us, in the catalogue of whose works there is to be found the first mention of a picture that was nothing more than a landscape)—it was he, also, who first gave dignity and influence to the profession of the portrait-painter; and it is by no mere accident that these two modern modes of art found such powerful expression at his hands. Their establishment, at that time, signalised the exhaustion of the material upon which the earlier and more passionate art had employed itself, and gave warning that painting was about to make a new return to nature, to regain the freshness and the veracity it had lost, and, perhaps, one day, to bring back new resources of reality, to be moulded once more to the shape and colour of our sublimest thoughts. That day has, perhaps,

not yet come. From Titian's time to our own, the claims of realism have been in the ascendant. For 300 years art has mainly rested content with the triumph of imitative skill, and nearly all that has possessed a different aim has been rather artificially grafted upon its epoch, and never freely born of the hour.

And yet, in this long communion with the realities of nature, there is to be found an element of hope for the future. For it is not to be thought that the progress of the painter's or the sculptor's craft represents one continuous and steady development. The history of the past, if we read it aright, would seem rather to show that art is for ever passing from symbol to illusion, and back again from illusion to symbolism. The artist, in his relation to the outward realities of the world, is like a settler in some new and untilled tract of country, who begins by making a clearing for his home, and gradually transforms what he has won, until it bears, in every corner, the impress of his spirit and the mode of his daily life. And then, when cultivation has done

its appointed task, when flowers have grown up in barren places, and patterns of his own devising have been spread over the surface of the land, the adventurous spirit, which had first led him so far from the common ways of men, once more re-asserts itself. He begins to weary of the work of his hand, and grows fatigued with the order and regularity which he has so carefully implanted upon the chaos he had found. He sighs for the wilder growth that lies beyond his present domain, until, with quickened energy, and a sense almost of disgust for what he has achieved, he passes once more into the outer tangle of untamed reality, and loses himself, for a while, in the rich luxuriance of a primitive world.

And so it is with the life of art. The glory of art lies in its power to transform the common facts of nature, till they take a colour and passion from the human spirit; but in this glory lurk the elements of decay; for what was a living symbol in the minds of one age, becomes in the next a thing of out-worn fashion and uncertain significance. Little by little, as the dialect per-

fectured by great men falls from common lips, it loses the accent of vitality ; and lesser scholars, trading upon their master's discoveries, are scarcely conscious how far they have changed his language, till the world finds that it is listening to a dead tongue.

When Michelangelo died it was vain to hope that those who came after him could carry forward the sublime style which is associated with his name, and his death, therefore, was the signal and the note of the downfall of the glorious art of Florence. But Venice had never, from the first, so closely associated itself with the higher movement of the intellect, and, therefore, the masters of Venice were able to survive the signs of intellectual decay, and were even helpful in forwarding the revolution by which it was succeeded.

We need not deny the imaginative beauty of Venetian painting in order to acknowledge that its essence lay elsewhere, and that its strength depended, not so much upon the expression of ideas, as upon a surpassing beauty in the render-

ing of the facts of nature. It was by the studied cultivation, from the first, of these purely naturalistic elements of painting, that the Venetian masters—Titian most of all—were enabled to herald the advent of a new style; and when art passed from Italy to Flanders, the great Flemish painters, with Rubens and Vandyck at their head, could well take from Venice something that should be of service to themselves. And it was from Flanders—as we have already hinted—that the English School borrowed its first lessons. Just as Holbein, a century before, had introduced among us the earlier and more precise style of portraiture, so Vandyck now came with the attractions of a later style, if not to found a national school of painting, at least to establish a standard of taste that should prepare the way for native painters when the time had come for them to arise.

When Vandyck died Sir Peter Lely stepped into his place, and Lely, in his turn, was succeeded by Kneller, an artist who enjoyed the honour of having been employed at Court during

the reigns of five successive sovereigns. But neither of these painters could be said to have very worthily carried forward the principles which Vandyck had introduced, and, accordingly, when our native artists, Reynolds and Gainsborough, arose, their advent seemed like a new birth for art in England, as it certainly was a new birth for English art.

This is not the time to insist upon the beauty of the work that these men produced. All that we have to note is, that now, for the first time, England possessed a school of painting of her own, and that the departments in which that school can claim pre-eminence, are those whose supremacy Titian's genius had already forecast. Gainsborough not only holds an equal place with Reynolds as a master of portrait, but he was, in fact, the founder of the modern school of landscape; and, when he died, Reynolds—his rival—praised him as the greatest landscape-painter of his time. But, before either of these two portrait-painters had begun their work, another artist had arisen, through whom we

may say that English painting made its first effort to fit its language to the rendering of intellectual ideas. Whatever may be the faults or limitations of Hogarth's genius, his work at least possesses for us the invaluable quality of sincerity. Entirely free from affectation, and unsupported by the inherited traditions of the schools, it permits us to judge, as well in its achievement as in its failure, of the existing resources of English painting, in the first genuine essay that had been made to forge out of lines and colours the means of intellectual expression. Reynolds, with his learning and high culture in the work of past schools, was unable, even when he attempted to touch upon imaginative themes, to conceal those defects of power which Hogarth's painting always frankly confessed. No one was ever more completely under the guidance of imaginative impulse than the author of the "Rake's Progress"; no one, on the other hand, can more justly claim the title of a born painter. But Hogarth's ideas did not rise to sublimity, and his artistic gifts were still closely confined

within the scope of realistic effect. He succeeded in his fanciful compositions because he did not misunderstand or misuse the means at his command; and even in those cases where we hesitate to admit the force or the refinement of the invention, the result is still saved from insignificance by the beauty and the delicacy of the painting. He has so long been praised as a satirist, and so justly applauded for those qualities in his art that are not of the essence of art itself, that his gifts as a painter have either not been sufficiently remarked, or have been absolutely ignored. "As a painter," writes Walpole, "he had but slender merit," a judgment which later taste has partly reversed, though there still remains a vague feeling that Hogarth's work does not possess sufficient beauty to be judged by the highest standard. This feeling is, I think, partly dependent upon a confusion between the thought and the means of its expression: it mistakes the occasional coarseness of the theme upon which he is employed for coarseness of handiwork, but, although this may

be true in so far as it regards the qualities of the design, where the expression must share all the defects of the thought, it is absolutely untrue as regards the qualities of his painting. As a colourist, Hogarth will bear comparison with the men of his time, and in his knowledge of tone—the law which regulates the strength of colour in position, and the modifying influence of one tint upon its neighbour—he still remains without a rival in our school.

Hogarth, Reynolds, and Gainsborough. These men are the types of what was of genuine growth in the art of their time. Their achievements were the outcome of a sure process of evolution; in their labours they had the support and guidance of a long and unbroken tradition of executive style. How instinctively, by the light of their genius, they were able to measure the resources at their command, and, with the native prudence of genius, refuse to attempt what lay beyond their powers, we have seen by reference to a different order of art, which others were vainly seeking to establish. Barry, Blake,

and Haydon: such men belong, we may say, to the church militant of art. But it is not to be said of a painter like Barry that, because he fell short of the goal towards which he pressed, that therefore his influence counts for nothing in the history of our school. The time had not yet come for such victories as he sought to win. But whoever hopes for conquest in that vast realm of ideal beauty that he saw only from afar and with uncertain vision, must strive with something of his noble persistence and undaunted courage. He was the first notable instance, in our school, of a painter devoting himself altogether to the pursuit of a kind of art that offered no hope of great immediate reward. He may, indeed, have been misled by ambition, but the penalty fell chiefly on himself; and we may forget the frailties of his temper—nay, we may even forgive the faults of his design—in gratitude for the grand and austere example which he set to the students of succeeding generations.

III.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

THERE is for many reasons something peculiarly touching in the confession of faith with which Sir Joshua Reynolds closes his last discourse to the students of the Royal Academy. The occasion is the annual distribution of prizes in December of the year 1790, and he is speaking of the great genius whom he so little resembled and so much admired. "It will not," he says, "I hope, be thought presumptuous in me to appear in the train, I cannot say of his imitators, but of his admirers. I have taken another course—one more suited to my abilities and to the taste of the times in which I live. Yet however unequal I feel myself to that attempt, were I now to begin the world again, I would

tread in the steps of that great master : to kiss the hem of his garment, to catch the slightest of his perfections, would be glory and distinction enough for an ambitious man. I feel a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite. I reflect, not without vanity, that these discourses bear testimony of my admiration of that truly divine man ; and I should desire that the last words which I should pronounce in this academy, and from this place, might be the name of MICHELANGELO."

These eloquent sentences were, indeed, the last public utterance of their author. Within fourteen months of the time of their delivery Reynolds died peacefully at his house in Leicester Square, congratulating himself, as Burke tells us, on "a happy conclusion of a happy life." And even at this date his career as a painter was already at an end. He had entirely lost the sight of one of his eyes, and could no longer work at his easel. In the January of the same year, writing to Sheridan,

who had asked to be allowed to purchase the beautiful picture of "St. Cecilia" which was lately exhibited at Burlington House, Reynolds had himself announced the termination of his life's labours. "It is with great regret," he says, "that I part with the best picture I ever painted, for tho' I have every year hoped to paint better and better, and may truly say *Nil actum reputans dum quid superesset agendum*, it has not been always the case. However, there is now an end of the pursuit : the race is over whether it is won or lost."

In one sense Reynolds must have well known that the race had been won. As he observed to Malone, he had painted "two generations of the beauties of England," and painted them in such a way that we think of them now chiefly in connection with his name. In portraiture, which was indeed the only branch of art that had any real vitality during the time in which he lived, he was without a rival either in England or on the Continent, and yet in thinking of his great fame, and in acknowledging

the admirable beauty of his pictures, it is impossible not to be reminded of these words of his in which he has set down for us, not indeed an image of what he was, but a record of what he had wished to be. In common with every artist of fine temper, Reynolds' vision of beauty far transcended the limits of his own accomplishment ; the inherent capabilities of his genius are fully measured in the works that he actually produced, and there is no evidence in them that he could under any conditions have found better occupation for the resources that were at his command : and yet there is a certain pathos in the thought that while he was busy in registering the individual features of the men and women of his own generation, he was at the same time dreaming of the great imaginative art of Florence. When we have learned to love the work of a great man, we are curious to know what it was that he himself most deeply loved and revered, and in this sense, Sir Joshua's passionate eulogy of Michelangelo is deeply interesting to us. Nor was the special

tendency of his ambition wholly without influence upon his own practice. I do not now speak of the deliberate attempts at ideal composition for which he occasionally deserted his work in portraiture. These experiments, indeed, in so far as they may be judged by the higher standard to which they affect to conform, are rather to be counted among the failures of his art. They serve for the most part only to mark the essential limitations of his genius, not to express its resources, and they prove to us that in the course which he had marked out for himself his instinct was just and true. It is in his practice as a portrait-painter that the happy influence of his finely cultivated taste most conspicuously displays itself. There is in all his work a certain modesty of temper as of a mind ever deeply conscious of a style greater than his own. If he is more constantly fascinating as a painter than even the greatest of his contemporaries, it is because he had in him more of the spirit of the student. "I know no man," said Johnson, "who passed through life

with more observation than Reynolds," and the remark applies as much to the things of art as to the facts of life itself. With Reynolds the assurance of the master never bordered on impertinence. He was searching always and to the end, and even those melancholy experiments with pigments and colours which have served to hasten the ruin of many of his pictures, are but the outward sign of a higher intellectual curiosity which is of the very essence of his genius. To the close of his long career his painting preserved the interesting characteristics that in the work of other men belong only to the season of youth and progress : he is little of a mannerist, because he has none of the settled confidence of style which begets mannerism : with each new subject he is moved to new effort and experiment ; and though the measure of his success is not always the same, even his failures are not the failures of audacity or self-assurance.

It was not then without profit that Reynolds revered and studied the great masters of an

earlier time. Though he possessed none of the gifts which allowed him to enter into their ideal world, he caught something of their spirit, and his constant respect for their greater achievements served always to ennoble his own practice. Nor did this contact with the art of the past weaken or impede the exercise of his own individuality. There is a prevalent notion that great originality does not demand the support of learning, and it is doubtless true that the spectacle of brilliant genius emerging from a background of ignorance has a vulgar glamour and attractiveness. But the only kind of originality worth the name, is that which eagerly appropriates all that can be learned, and still preserves its own identity. The sort of genius that cannot endure the test of study borders closely upon charlatanism, and upon this truth Reynolds himself was constantly insisting. "He appears not to have had the least conception," he says, still speaking of Michelangelo, "that his art was to be acquired by any other means than great labour; and yet he,

of all men that ever lived, might make the greatest pretensions to the efficacy of native genius and inspiration." And in the belief which he here expresses, we may find the secret of Reynolds' own success. That he, too, possessed his own share of native inspiration is shown clearly enough in the course of his practice as a painter. When we think of the art which he most loved, how modest by comparison seems the scope of his own achievement! If he had suffered himself to be led by his ambition, he would indeed have been the mere product of learning and pedantry, and his art would have gone the way of so many other experiments in the grand style, which found their grave in the eighteenth century. For a real revival of the imaginative art which had flowered in Italy the time was not ripe, nor were the men ready, and it was, therefore, with the native prudence of true genius that Reynolds, though he cherished, even to the last, the thought of Florence and its traditions, accepted for himself a humbler function, and was content

to labour in another field. And so it happens that in his own portrait, painted for the Royal Academy, although he has introduced the bust of Michelangelo to record his devotion to that master, the picture in itself reminds us, not of the art of Italy, but rather of the principles and style of the school of Rembrandt.

From the qualities of temperament that make themselves apparent in his work, we may partly understand how it was that Reynolds was so much beloved as a man. Even without the recorded opinion of his contemporaries, we should be prepared upon the evidence of his paintings alone to meet in their author a mind at once simple and sympathetic, gentle and sincere. There must have been something of the heart of a child in one who could so win upon children as to wrest from them the secret of their unconscious grace and beauty; something also of the tenderness of a woman, in a painter who could induce the mothers of children to confide to him those unconstrained and exquisite images of maternal fondness that are the peculiar

property of his art. We must go back to the time when this one human relationship was deeply and constantly studied under the influence of religious impulse and tradition, to find a match for the sentiment that inspires these designs of Reynolds—for in this respect no one of his contemporaries was in any sort his equal. To the portraiture of Gainsborough we may perhaps turn with greater confidence for an exact reflex of the social life of his time. His women have often, it may be allowed, a superior distinction and style: they own the external charm that belongs to the manners, the costume, and the character of their epoch, whereas in the art of Reynolds we are constantly tempted to forget differences of rank and station in the enjoyment of a deeper and broader humanity. No portrait-painter before his time had taken so wide a range; he painted all classes, and all with equal sympathy, and this same quiet liberality of appreciation which animates his art entered in equal measure into his life, endearing him to men of varying intellectual gifts and of widely

divergent character and occupation. The well-known sentence of Johnson's, that he was "the most invulnerable man he knew ; whom, if he should quarrel with him he should find the most difficulty how to abuse," implies in itself only a negative judgment, and might aptly fit a nature that was capable of inspiring no real affection. But Johnson found warmer terms in which to describe his friend. In the summer of 1764, when Reynolds had been ill, he addressed him in words that he would not have used to a man he did not love, though the form in which he expresses himself may seem to us now somewhat ponderously polite. "Having had no particular account of your disorder," he writes, "I know not in what state it has left you. If the amusement of my company can exhilarate the languor of a slow recovery, I will not delay a day to come to you ; for I know not how I can so effectually promote my own pleasure as by pleasing you, or my own interest by preserving you, in whom, if I should lose you, I should lose about the only man whom I call a friend."

On another occasion, referring to his own melancholy, he lets fall an observation that throws a pleasant light upon the character of the painter. "Some men," he says, "and very thinking men too, have not these vexing thoughts. Sir Joshua Reynolds is the same all the year round." Even the occasional differences between the two friends have a touch of kindness; and once when Johnson's rudeness had called forth Reynolds' dignity, the former grew suddenly humble, and with as near an approach to a blush as Boswell could bring himself to record, said, "Nay, don't be angry, I did not mean to offend you." The last vision we get of this happy friendship is Johnson's dying request that Reynolds would forgive him £30 which he had borrowed of him, as he wished to leave the money to a poor family.

The faithful Boswell lived to witness and to describe the last illness of Sir Joshua himself. The man who in his years of health and labour had been "the same all the year round" was not always proof against melancholy. "He

broods," writes Boswell, "over the dismal apprehension of becoming quite blind. He has been kept so low as to diet that he is quite relaxed and desponding;" and then he adds, "He who used to be looked upon as perhaps the most happy man in the world is now as I tell you." Within a few hours of his death, which took place shortly after this letter was written, Edmund Burke thus describes the character of his old friend—"His talents of every kind, powerful from nature, and not meanly cultivated by letters, his social virtues in all the relations and all the habitudes of life, rendered him the centre of a very great and unparalleled variety of agreeable societies which will be dissipated by his death. He had too much merit not to excite some jealousy, too much innocence to provoke any enmity. The loss of no man of his time can be felt with more sincere, general, and unmixed sorrow.—'Hail and Farewell.'" And in this same memorandum Burke aptly illustrates the source of that superior power in the portraiture of Reynolds to which reference has

already been made. "He communicated to that description of the art in which English artists are the most engaged, a variety, a fancy, and a dignity derived from the higher branches, which even those who professed them in a superior manner did not always preserve when they delineated individual nature. . . . In painting portraits he appeared not to be raised upon that platform, but to descend to it from a higher sphere."

It is curious to reflect that a man who lived to win the esteem and respect of the greatest of his contemporaries was at one time destined to fill a very humble sphere in life. Yet so it was. In the year 1740, Joshua, as his father expresses it, was "drawing near to seventeen," and it was therefore urgently necessary that he should make choice of a career. The elder Reynolds was himself a clergyman and the headmaster of the grammar school at Plympton, but he seems also to have dabbled a little in medicine, and to this cause is doubtless to be ascribed the idea which he had of apprenticing his son to an apothecary. Joshua had already made some

boyish experiments in design, which had attracted the favourable notice of a local artist. His own inclinations were therefore, we may assume, pretty clearly established, yet he told his father at the time that "he would rather be an apothecary than an *ordinary* painter, but if he could be bound to an eminent master he should choose the latter." The "eminent master" made his appearance in the person of Thomas Hudson, a native of Devonshire, who since the retirement of his master, Jonathan Richardson, occupied the foremost place among the portrait-painters of his time. Hudson has received less than justice at the hands of the biographers of Reynolds. He was an artist of considerable power, possessed of a solid simplicity of taste, and working with a sound tradition of executive style. When the younger painter left his studio he could have had little to unlearn, for Hudson's manner had in it nothing of artifice or pretence, and in the earlier portraits of Reynolds' which reveal the influence of his master's teaching, there may be found a certain quality of direct-

ness and sincerity that give them a peculiar charm and attraction. In this class may be particularly noticed among the works exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery the youthful portrait of Lady Elizabeth Montagu, the half-length of the Countess of Essex, and the graceful composition of Lady Cathcart and her child. But the last-named picture also serves to remind us that at this time the talent of the painter was being moulded by other and larger influences. The form of the design is in some sense a reminiscence of the manner of Andrea del Sarto, and we are recalled to the fact that at the date of its execution Reynolds had but lately returned from a two years' sojourn in Italy. Although there is no sign as yet of that richness of colouring which he afterwards acquired, the spirit of the great masters is already at work in the young man's mind. He is beginning to paint portraits with a sense that the world possessed the record of an art that owned a higher function than portraiture, and this conviction was destined to exert a lasting control over the exercise of his own genius.

It speaks strongly for the good sense that lay at the root of Reynolds' character that, with the fruit of his Italian studies fresh in his recollection, he did not then attempt to do what he afterwards regretted he had not done. Standing at this time on the threshold of his artistic career, he might, to use his own words, have sought "to follow in the footsteps of Michelangelo," and if he had so chosen the world would have lost a great portrait-painter, and gained nothing in exchange. A glance at the so-called imaginative art of his contemporaries can leave us in no doubt on this head; for the invention of the eighteenth century, so far as it expressed itself in art, was barren and logical, destitute in almost equal measure of the vivid charm of natural beauty, and of the impress of its author's individuality. In such a season of vague generalisation wherein a cold and abstract formalism was made to do duty for the passionate impulse of genuine imagination, the practice of portraiture afforded the only safe anchorage to an artist of veracity and power; and Reynolds' undisputed supremacy

over all other painters of his generation was due, not merely to a right understanding of his own capabilities, but also to a keen perception of the genius of his age. He lived to witness among his own countrymen the shipwreck of Barry's high ambition, who nearly thirty years afterwards returned from Italy determined to rival the correctness of the antique, and the excellence of the Renaissance. Nor was the failure which Barry's career served to illustrate merely local. If Reynolds had looked abroad he could not have discovered anything to shake his resolution or to encourage the pursuit of higher aims. He stands out as one of the few English artists who enjoy a European reputation, but it may be doubted whether it is always sufficiently realised either in England or abroad, that in his painting we have absolutely the most complete and masterly achievement of the age in which he lived. In France there was certainly no one fit to rank as his rival. Watteau, the genius of an earlier generation, had died two years before Reynolds was born, and Prud'hon's activity as

an artist scarcely commenced before the close of the century. There was nothing surely in the art of Boucher, with its enfeebled transcript of the weaker side of Rubens and its simpering indelicacy that was meant to do duty for refinement, nothing again in the prettiness of Greuze, in which the innocence of youth is supposed to express itself by a precocious mimicry of the ways of passion, that deserves to be set beside such a picture of all the varied aspects of the social life of his time as presents itself to us in the collected work of Reynolds. These men—and their names are the most eminent among his contemporaries in France—possessed an undoubted mastery over the technical resources of their art, and it is very noteworthy in the case of Greuze, that when he is seen at his best, as he may be seen in the Museum at Montpellier, it is as a painter of simple portraits that he most readily commands our respect. But his naturalism, such as it was, did not avail to found a tradition or to avert the pedantic and paralysing revival of classicism that came with the advent

of David and the Empire. There was, in short, no artistic individuality on the Continent that could be said to compete with Reynolds in his generation, and if he failed to give to his painting the wider scope that he desired for it, his failure was no more than that of others who had not the splendid excuse which his actual accomplishment in the realm of portraiture has left in vindication of his fame. It may, indeed, be allowed, that the fancy and grace of Boucher is better than the colossal dulness of Barry, just as the academic gravity of David surpasses the bourgeois invention of Benjamin West. But in the presence of a painter like Reynolds, we feel that we are on higher and surer ground than any of these men could hold, and at a season when all art that professed to be led by imagination was either vacuous or trivial, we are forced to the conclusion, that in limiting his energies to the profession of portraiture, Reynolds judged wisely, both for his own sake and for ours.

It is impossible to survey such a series of portraits as that which was lately brought together

at the Grosvenor Gallery, without becoming keenly interested in the personality not merely of the artist, but of his sitters. Painting makes delightful biography; it takes up each individual life at the happiest moments, touching lightly upon human imperfections and revealing to us, with a force that literature cannot match, the vivid image of men and women as they appear to one another. In the presence of this company of wits and scholars, of famous statesmen and still more famous beauties, of mothers with their children, and of children grown to be mothers, it seems almost as though, by some process of magic, the society of the last century had been suddenly reconstituted in its original form. Behind the frames from which these living faces smile and gaze at one another lurks a whole library of history and scandal, with its record of ambition and happiness and disappointment, but in the ideal world to which the artist has conveyed them, there resides some power of enchantment that keeps malice dumb and stills the gossiping tongues. It is only the

sweeter side of life that his painting consents to keep for us ; and as we watch its onward movement clearly mirrored in the different phases of his art, we are half cheated into the belief that there never could have been a society so pure and gracious as that amidst which he lived. There is in all this something of the sweetness and gentleness of his own temper. The grave simplicity of Reynolds' character finds its reflex in his art, and he was led as by the force of instinct to choose the fairer and finer aspects of the life of his time. "I hope, my dear," said Blake, in his old age, to a young lady who was sitting beside him, "that God will make the world as beautiful to you as it has always been to me," and there is something in the sentiment that Reynolds might have echoed, for he too, according to his own ideal, had been constantly on the alert to discover and record the beauty that surrounded him. And in this he often went far beyond the conventional limits of mere portraiture, attracted not merely by individual faces, but by the simple and happy relationships

that underlie the fabric of even the most complex social life. If it were only for his love of children, and his power of interpreting the fascination of childish beauty, he would still amply deserve the fame that he has won. In a certain sense Reynolds may be said to rank as the inventor of this particular department of portraiture. Others indeed, and amongst them men more highly gifted than he, had painted the likenesses of children, but not with his peculiar appreciation of their charm. In the scheme of his art they occupy a little world of their own, where the finely marked individuality of childish character is made the subject of separate and subtle analysis. Mr. F. G. Stephens has devoted a very interesting essay to the consideration of Sir Joshua's child portraits, and it is surprising to find from the exhaustive list that he has made of the different subjects, how large a share of Sir Joshua's artistic energy was expended upon the painting of children. Throughout the whole of his long career, these little people exercised a constant fascination over

his genius, and although his success with them is not always the same, he was continually discovering some new form in which to acknowledge the sovereignty of their empire. One of the very last pictures upon which he was engaged at the time when failing eyesight put a sudden end to his labours, was the delightful composition of little Miss Frances Harris with a dog; and we know by his own confession that he considered the picture of "The Strawberry Girl" one of the few really original works he could claim to have produced. Sometimes indeed, as in the "Felina," and again in the "Muscipula," he was betrayed by the research of a certain kind of elfish expression into an exaggeration of sentiment that is not wholly agreeable. But when he was better inspired, as in the picture of little Miss Cholmondeley carrying her dog across the brook, the result is absolutely simple and unaffected. The little maiden is here wholly intent upon her task, and unconscious of the presence of the painter; nothing could be more delicately

rendered than the expression of the drooping eyelids and half-open mouth, as she puts forth all her strength to support the weight that strains upon her slender arms; nothing again more quietly humorous in its effect than the contrast between the child's evident anxiety and the smug contentment imaged upon the face of the pampered favourite, who takes as his right the luxury which he enjoys. Reynolds must have been keenly appreciative of the tacit alliance existing between young children and dumb animals. It was doubtless in some degree for the benefit of his youthful sitters that he kept these studio pets upon the premises, and it is extraordinary to note the varied ingenuity with which he brings them into the scheme of his composition. The same dog will occur again and again in his pictures, but always with some new motive and suggestion, and when the biography of one of these creatures is complete, another takes its place, and is installed as the painter's resident assistant. They were as invaluable to Reynolds as his "drapery men," in

their own way, and when we think how happily by their aid he was enabled to enliven the decorous dulness of the portrait-painter's labours, it seems wonderful that his successors in the art have not more often enlisted the services of such admirable helpers. Some of these dogs of Reynolds' must have formed, during the term of their service, quite a distinguished circle of acquaintances. The first of the race that we meet with in his paintings is the Italian greyhound in the picture of Lady Cathcart and her child, possibly a companion of the painter's foreign travels, but not as it would seem destined long to survive the hardships of an English climate, for we do not recall an instance of his reappearance as a sitter. He was quickly supplanted by an impudent little Scotch terrier, who very appropriately makes his *début* with Mrs. Abington in the year 1764, and is a constant attendant for some time to come. His features may be recognised in the portrait of Miss Lister of the same year, and again in the group of Lady Spencer and her daughter of the

year 1769, and in the half-length of Miss Vansittart painted in 1773. The larger and more dignified animal who figures in the portrait of Miss Harris was evidently the favourite of later life. He may be identified with the dog accompanying the shepherd boy in the design for one of the windows at New College, and he also plays a prominent part in the composition of Master Philip Yorke, who stands gazing at a robin that has perched upon his arm.

But Reynolds had another secret of giving interest and vivacity to the portraits of children—he painted them with their mothers. It seems indeed a common expedient enough, and it is strange how rarely we encounter these family groups among the portraits of the present day. Strange, because the society of our own time does not account itself less domesticated than that of the eighteenth century, and because, if the fact were only known and recognised, the association surely adds much to the beauty of the result. Certainly the women of Reynolds' painting never look so charming as when they

are with their children. Compare for instance, in the exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery, the full-length portrait of Elizabeth Gunning, posed in the conscious character of a reigning beauty, with the beautiful and fascinating picture of Lavinia, Countess Spencer, with her little son beside her ; or with the group of Georgiana Spencer and her daughter. The series of portraits at Chatsworth and Althorp, of which this is one of the most delightful examples, form by themselves quite a complete family history, and we are reminded in looking at them of Reynolds' boast that he had painted two generations of English beauties. The little girl who stands on the table held in her mother's arms had no consciousness then that she would one day be known as the "famous" Duchess of Devonshire, and the painter himself, perhaps, did not suspect that seventeen years later he would meet her again with her own child upon her knee, and make out of the picture that presented itself to him a composition destined, it may be, to be as famous

as the duchess herself. It is very interesting to mark the gradual transition of Reynolds' style between the one portrait and the other. Much had been added in the interval, a richer and more brilliant system of colouring, greater ease in composition, and a quicker power to seize and register those spontaneous and momentary truths of gesture and expression which are of the very essence of the highest artistic achievement. In all these attributes of his art Reynolds was constantly advancing, even to the very close of his career, but in some of his later portraits, though not especially in this, we miss something of that directness and simplicity in perception, and something also of the clearness and sharpness of definition which gives the charm of perfect sincerity to his work of the time when he first painted the duchess as a child. The tendency towards a certain vagueness of individualisation which proved absolutely fatal to the ideal and inventive painting of the eighteenth century, a tendency showing itself not merely in the chosen type of character, but

in the execution of every detail and accessory of the design, was not always or wholly excluded even from the safer realm of portraiture, and although Reynolds' so-called poetical compositions fail chiefly because they are in essence only portraits in masquerade, yet by a process of apparent contradiction the one element of weakness in his work in portraiture arises from the occasional temptation to generalise upon concrete facts, and thus to leave the personal identity of his subject imperfectly expressed.

It so happens that the series of portraits at Althorp comprises some of the finest specimens of Reynolds' work at the most interesting periods of his career. Later in date than the picture just mentioned, but still belonging to a time when his resources as a colourist had not yet been fully developed, comes the full-length of the young Lord Althorp, painted in 1776. He it was who formed the famous library at Althorp, and became the first president of the Roxburghe Club. A few years later he was to marry the beautiful Lavinia Bingham, whose well-known

portrait, with the face half shadowed by a broad-brimmed hat, belonging to the year 1782, marks a further advance in the painter's command of his resources. Then follows the head of the same lady painted shortly after her marriage, and then two years later she appears in the picture to which reference has already been made, with another young Lord Althorp at her knee. Here the painter is in the plenitude of his powers, and it may be doubted whether, so far as colour is concerned, his work was at any other period so rich and splendid. It was the year of the "Tragic Muse," which, despite the counter-attraction of much else that we have learned to know and admire, still stands out as in some sense the capital achievement of his life. The colouring of the work of this period is Reynolds' sufficient vindication for all those luckless experiments and failures in the use of his material upon which perhaps too much stress has been laid. For in whatever way the result has been accomplished, it is unquestionably true that he here approaches nearer to the mellow

splendour of the Venetian painters than any other artist of his time, either in England or abroad. Gainsborough, indeed, was a gifted colourist, but even on this ground he cannot claim the variety or solidity of Reynolds' palette. Certain effects he produced in colour may, perhaps, be cited as showing a stronger originality, but with Reynolds at his best, we forget whether the result is new or old, derived or invented, in the satisfied enjoyment of its beauty. And if Gainsborough was not the equal of Sir Joshua as a colourist, he was certainly far below him in that fineness of perception and grave tenderness of sentiment by which portraiture, at its happiest moments claims the support of imagination. In the picture of Mrs. Sheridan, rightly esteemed by Reynolds himself to be one of the greatest of his works, we may see how much of poetry and beauty may enter into the faithful rendering of an individual face and form; we may find too in the contemporary record of her character enough to account for the degree in which the painter was here inspired by his

subject. "Her exquisite and delicate loveliness," write the authors of Sir Joshua's life, "all the more fascinating for the tender sadness which seemed, as a contemporary describes it, to project over her the shadow of an early death; her sweet voice and the pathetic expression of her singing; the timid and touching grace of her air and deportment had won universal admiration for Eliza Ann Linley." Sir Joshua first met her shortly after the romantic marriage with Sheridan, at the musical parties given by his friend Mr. Coote, and he commenced the picture just before the dramatist won his fame by the production of "The Rivals." She had a way, as we are told, of "gathering little children about her, and singing them childish songs with such a playfulness of manner, and such a sweetness of look and voice as was quite enchanting," and it may have been that Sir Joshua had seen her so employed, and that in painting his "St. Cecilia" he was merely reproducing a lovely reality. If it were so it would take nothing from the praise that is due to its author; for

to recreate a reality so delicate and refined, and to endow the mimic features with the charm that belonged to them in actual life, implies, in the mind of the painter, qualities akin to those he seeks to represent. When portraiture reaches to such a level as this it is hard to beat, and in the presence of a work so subtly reflective of all that is loveliest in nature, we are made to feel that only the highest order of imaginative art can claim to share its throne.

Even those who were most cruelly hostile to the course which Reynolds had adopted in his art came at last to a conviction of his greatness. At one time the ill-fated Barry had been foremost in attack, and if we can forget his own failure, and remember only the high ambition with which he had set out upon his career, we may partly understand how it was that he so bitterly resented Reynolds' success. And yet Barry lived to recant, and when the great portrait-painter was gone, he grew eloquent in his praises. Alluding to the closing sentences of Sir Joshua's last discourse, which have already

been quoted, he declared that "nothing would be more unjust than to take this passage too literally; it is the natural language of a mind full of generous heat, making but little account of what it had attained to, and rapidly in progress to something further." Perhaps Barry was right; and yet we cannot but reflect that the feeling of reverence for the great masters of ideal design, which Reynolds cherished throughout his life, must have given a bitter sting to the earlier invective of the hot-headed Irishman. Reynolds cannot but have been reminded that in spite of the eminence to which he had risen, his own ideal had not been perfectly realised. Great as he was, he had meant to be something greater, something different; and though he might find in Barry's failure the best vindication of the more modest scope of his own practice, he did not, as we have seen from his own confession, part from the dreams of his youth without a pang of regret. In another view of the matter, the antagonism between these two men may be said to represent a conflict that is almost as old

as art itself, and is likely to continue as long as art endures. Barry was indeed, in his own practice, but a poor champion of the enlarged views of art which he professed, while Reynolds was an accomplished master; but the ideas of which they may be taken to have been two exponents are radically and permanently divided. Between those who are content with the beauty that nature offers and those who only use the forms and colours of reality to shape a vision of their own, there can never be an absolute agreement, for although both may seek and find the truth, yet truth like art is many-sided, and refuses to yield itself absolutely to any sect or creed. To quote the words of Reynolds himself, whose survey of the varied aims and possibilities of painting stretched far beyond the limits of his own accomplishment: "The art which we profess has beauty for its object: this it is our business to discover and express; but the beauty of which we are in quest is general and intellectual: it is an idea that subsists only in the mind; the sight never beheld it, nor has the

hand expressed it: it is an idea residing in the breast of the artist which he is always labouring to impart, and which he dies at last without imparting."

IV.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A.

It is strange how often in matters of art the accident of time forces a comparison between talents that have but little in common. In our own day we are all familiar with the controversy so often renewed, and always so fruitlessly waged, over the respective claims of two distinguished novelists. It is almost impossible in any general company to speak warmly of Dickens without arousing a counterblast in favour of Thackeray, or to mention the author of *Vanity Fair* without being instantly challenged for a judgment upon the merits of *Pickwick*. The history of English painting offers an example of the same unlucky predicament. In the art of the eighteenth century

the names of Reynolds and Gainsborough are inseparably linked together, and the individual genius of these distinguished painters is nearly always appraised by an exhaustive process of comparison that sometimes does less than justice to both. Nor is it altogether possible even at this time to escape from inveterate usage. In reality they were men of opposite temperament, very differently endowed by nature, and offering in their work the most striking contrasts of system and style; and yet so narrow was the world of art in which they moved, so little liberty of choice did it afford even to men of the highest eminence in their profession, that Reynolds and Gainsborough were forced into constant competition from the mere fact that they were continually engaged in a common employment. Out of necessity, rather than by any process of election, they became the rival portrait-painters of their day. At that time, indeed, it was difficult for a painter to hope for success in any other branch of art, or to resist the rewards which the successful practice of

portraiture so freely offered. And yet it may be doubted, in spite of the fame they enjoyed, whether in either case the artist's ambition was fully satisfied. Reynolds, as we know, even to the end of his long life, was dreaming of the greater achievements of the art of Italy. While he was busily engaged with a host of fashionable sitters, his secret and unsatisfied longing was to follow in the footsteps of Michelangelo, and his last injunction to the students gathered around him was that they should seek to acquire that grandeur and nobility of design which he had been forced merely to admire.

Gainsborough too must have had his regrets, but how different in kind. In the midst of his successes in Bath or in London, his thoughts would wander back, not to the achievements of an earlier time, but to the pleasant scenes in which he had passed his boyhood. It must have been with something of bitterness that he noted his growing fame as a painter of portraits, and the comparative indifference with which the fashionable public by whom he was em-

ployed regarded those studies of English landscape that gave to the artist himself a keener pleasure and a higher enjoyment. "Gainsborough's landscapes," says Sir William Beechey, "stood ranged in long lines from his hall to his painting room, and they who came to sit to him for their portraits rarely deigned to honour them with a look as they passed them." And yet it was as a lover of outward nature that Gainsborough first asserted his powers as an artist; and if we are to judge his work aright we must never forget this youthful passion of his for the simple beauties of his Suffolk home. As Mr. Wedmore has happily observed, he painted portraits for his own generation, but he painted landscape for himself and for us; and now, in the clearer light of a later time, it is not difficult for us to enjoy what he has left behind him in this kind, or to fix the place which Gainsborough occupies in the advancing development of a branch of art that has a peculiarly national character.

Thus it will be seen at the outset that al-

though, under an influence that was stronger than the will of either of them, Reynolds and Gainsborough met on common ground, the special predilections which they brought to their task are sharply contrasted. The one, deeply learned in all that art had achieved, carried to the practice of portraiture something of the dignity, and sometimes also a little of the artifice, that was derived from a study of the schools: the other, without the knowledge or perhaps even the ambition which his rival possessed, added to a quick and lively appreciation of character the freshness and charm of a painter who is wont to draw his inspiration directly from nature. Gainsborough interpreted a lovely face or a graceful form as he would have painted a landscape, seizing first upon the merely picturesque aspect of his subject, and not searching anxiously to emphasize the subtler qualities of character. Thus it happens that his pictures have often less intellectual weight than those of his rival, and at the same time a finer and more delicate reality of outward

bearing. They register with greater felicity those transient graces of gesture and expression which would sometimes escape the more serious student of character, but his triumphs in this kind, even when they are most admirable, were rarely gained without some corresponding sacrifice, and we have now and then to acknowledge that he has scarcely penetrated beneath the surface of his subject, and that his sitter only lives for us in the particular attitude that he has struck upon the canvas. And it follows as a natural consequence alike of the qualities and of the limitations of Gainsborough's genius that he is better in his portraits of women than of men, and that he is more successful in the rendering of beauty than in the record of character. How little his genius was pre-occupied by any reference to the inner life or experience of those who sat to him, and how strikingly in this respect it differed from that of Reynolds, is very clearly marked in the portraits of Mrs. Siddons which these painters have left for us. When Reynolds came to

paint the famous actress he thought of her art, and he presented her as the embodiment of the Tragic Muse, whereas in Gainsborough's portrait, also a masterpiece in its style, the actress appears only as a graceful and charming woman, with no suggestion of intellectual supremacy and no reference to the career which made her illustrious.

It is not surprising, when we consider the peculiar characteristics of Gainsborough's art, that there should be so little to record concerning the facts of his life. Reynolds lived among the men whose faces he has preserved for us ; he was interested in all the intellectual movements of his time, and, even apart from his reputation as a painter, he was received on a footing of equality by the brightest wits and the keenest intellects of his generation. Gainsborough, too, loved society, and his genial disposition must have always made him welcome ; but his position in this respect was by no means the same as that of his great contemporary. Apart from his painting, he seems to

have had but one strong passion—a love of music, and, if report speaks truly, he was himself a tolerable performer on the violin. This taste he had acquired even before he left his native home, and at a time when his prospects as a painter were by no means brilliant. Of his fitness to take high rank in his profession there can, however, never have been any question. His mother, we are told, devoted much of her time to flower-painting, and it may have been from her example that he derived his earliest impulse towards the study of art ; but however this may be, we know for certain that even as a boy at school he was already exhibiting the promise of future accomplishment.

The painter's father, John Gainsborough, was a respectable trader in the little town of Sudbury, in Suffolk. His business is variously described at different times as that of "a milliner," a "clothier," and a "crapemaker," but throughout his life, and in whatever occupation he was employed, he seems to have

been regarded as a man of a kindly and generous disposition, well loved by his children, and respected by his fellow-townsmen. Nor was his good repute in that day at all affected by the fact that he was wont to carry on a contraband trade with Holland, and the circumstance indeed would scarcely be worth mention here but for the conjecture that through the old man's visits to the Low Countries the son may have learned something of the principles of Dutch art. It is by no means improbable that in this way some few examples of the landscape-painting of Holland may have found their way into the Sudbury home, and it is at least certain that Gainsborough's earlier work in this kind betrays unmistakable evidence of some acquaintance with the Dutch masters. Owing, however, to the impenetrable stupidity of the painter's first biographer, we know but little of the facts of his youthful career. Thicknesse would seem to have written his bald account of Gainsborough's life with no other purpose than to make known to the world that

he was the artist's earliest patron, "the first man," as he himself modestly announces, "who perceived through clouds of bad colouring what an accurate eye he possessed, and who dragged him from the obscurity of a country town at a time when all his neighbours were as ignorant of his great talent as he was himself." Very little beyond this do we gather from the work of the incapable Thicknesse, save indeed the wearisome details of a quarrel between himself and the painter, which occurred in later life, and which could at no time have had any sort of interest for the world. And yet, foolish and worthless as this little book undoubtedly is, it was at least written by one who actually knew Gainsborough in his youth, and for that reason alone we seize eagerly even upon such miserable crumbs of fact as its pages offer. It is pleasant, for instance, to learn that the painter himself used to say of this time that "there was not a picturesque clump of trees, nor even a single tree of any beauty, nor hedgerow, stem, or post," for miles around his

home that was not accurately impressed upon his boyish mind. In these days, and for long after, Gainsborough indeed had no other thought but for the beauty of landscape. At the age of ten he was already a pupil of the Sudbury Grammar School, kept by his uncle, Mr. Burroughs, and even then he was already at work making sketches of the scenes around his home. It is true that his first recorded effort of imitation was of a somewhat different order. Art has often been strangely connected with forgery, and it was by means of an innocent experiment in forgery that the young Gainsborough first drew attention to his powers as an artist. His achievement in this direction was not so serious as that by which Michelangelo deceived his patron at Rome, but it at least effected its purpose. He did not produce a false antique, but, in order to obtain a holiday which his father had refused to grant, he forged an exact imitation of that respectable old gentleman's signature, and successfully imposed upon his master. He wrote out in his father's

handwriting the simple request, "Please give Tom a holiday," and the holiday was secured accordingly. At first, as it would seem, the father was sufficiently irate. "Tom will one day be hanged," was the old gentleman's laconic comment upon his son's perverted ingenuity; but the mother, taking a kindlier view of the matter, produced for inspection some of the truant Tom's boyish sketches, and the father's forecast was thereupon changed to the more hopeful prophecy, that Tom would "one day be a genius."

In this case, certainly, second thoughts were best, and fortunately for the little artist, his father acted on the assumption that the boy was destined to be a painter and not a criminal. After many a solemn family council, at which the outraged schoolmaster assisted, it was decided that Thomas, who was then fifteen years of age, should be sent to London. Of his sojourn in the great city we know but little, save that he was befriended by the engraver, Gravelot, that through his good offices he was

admitted into the St. Martin's Lane Academy, and that he subsequently attached himself to the studio of Frank Hayman, from whose companionship he is supposed to have derived some taste of convivial society, if not any added knowledge of his art. Fulcher, a biographer, whose work seems almost brilliant after the pompous dulness of Thicknesse, seems to hint that at this time Gainsborough was chiefly employed in sowing his wild oats; but his excesses cannot have been carried very far, for after three years' study he set up for himself as a portrait-painter in Hatton Garden, and it was only from lack of patronage that he was forced, in the year 1745, to return to Sudbury. It may be too that he was haunted by the desire to return once more to the scenes he had learned to love as a boy. For although his vision of the possibilities of art in London must have already convinced him that in the practice of portrait-painting lay the only road to fame, he did not then, or at any later time, forget or neglect his early devotion to landscape. Once safely back in

Suffolk, he betook himself again to his outdoor studies, and it was during one of these sketching excursions that he first beheld the lady who was to become his wife. Or so, indeed, the legend runs, for now we are asked to believe that it is only a legend, and that his first vision of the beautiful Miss Burr was gained at some sittings she gave him for her portrait. Anyway the attachment was romantic enough, for the young lovers were married when Gainsborough was only eighteen years of age, and the lady a year his junior. And there is this added element of mystery about their love, that of Miss Burr's parentage nothing seems to be clearly known save the fact that she was in receipt of an annuity of £200 a year. By some authorities she is said to have been the daughter of one of our exiled princes, and this account of her origin is partly supported by some recorded expressions of the lady herself in later life, but the better opinion seems to be that she was the natural daughter of the Duke of Bedford. However this may be she proved a faithful and

loving wife to the painter, true to him in his early struggles and true to the end. And his struggles at this time were sufficiently severe. Soon after their marriage the young couple settled at Ipswich, renting a cottage of £6 a year, and to this time belongs the anecdote that, being sent for one day by a squire of the neighbourhood, Gainsborough found on his arrival that it was not an artist who was required, but a painter and glazier. He was not, however, altogether without friends who could better understand his worth. First in order came one Joshua Kirby, who introduced himself to the artist while he was sketching on the banks of the Orwell, and whose friendship endured while Kirby lived. Then in 1754 followed the pompous patron in the shape of the afore-mentioned Philip Thicknesse, of whom the best that can be said is that by his persuasion Gainsborough ultimately removed to Bath, and so established his fame as a painter of portraits. Other friends and patrons too are briefly mentioned by his biographers, and we

know from their report that at this time he was strongly attached to the study of music, and even in the Ipswich cottage he was wont to gather his musical companions about him.

It is, however, from his settlement in Bath that Gainsborough's success as an artist clearly dates, and for the sudden change in his fortunes which was thereby brought about Thicknesse deserves some credit. From this time also there is no longer any doubt as to the particular branch of art in which Gainsborough's reputation was destined to be made. A fashionable painter at Bath could be nothing else than a fashionable portrait-painter. Nor need it be supposed that in finally devoting himself to portraiture Gainsborough did any violence to his own feelings. We have spoken of him as being before all things a lover of landscape, and the passion for the beauty of nature that was in him from the first remained strong enough to the end to allow him even among his many commissions to return again and again to his first love. And in truth, if we glance at the history of art

we shall find that there is some natural alliance between the two pursuits, and that they have again and again been practised together. In our own time we have an instance of a great portrait-painter who is also a keen student of outward nature, and when landscape first emerged as a separate and distinct department of art it was under the guidance of a genius who was also famous in portrait. Of the modern feeling for landscape Titian may be said to have been the discoverer, and from his time onwards it constantly became an alternative study with men whose principal function in art was the interpretation of human character. We may cite the eminent examples of Rubens and Rembrandt; and even of Vandyck we have evidence in his drawings that he might, under different conditions, have left his mark in this department of art. There was therefore no good reason why Gainsborough should not have divided his energies between portrait and landscape, gaining equal fame in both. It was the taste of his time rather than the genius of

the artist which determined that he should concern himself mainly with the former, and it is a convincing proof of the painter's loyal devotion to nature that, despite the comparative indifference with which his work in this kind was regarded, he should nevertheless have accomplished enough to fix his rank as in some sense the founder of the English school of landscape. For although his manner of interpreting the beauty of our native scenery offers no mere literal transcript of reality, it clearly broke away from tradition, and is thus strongly opposed to the work of his great contemporary, Richard Wilson. Gainsborough's manner, in short, was the outcome of his own individuality, and if he changed or modified the actual truths presented to him it was with the design of fixing upon the canvas a purely personal impression of the chosen scene. Wilson, on the other hand, worked in obedience to certain settled principles of classical style. His genius shines through the conventions of his art, but the conventions exist nevertheless, and it is

obvious in all his work that he had no desire to cast them aside; rather, it may be said, he treated them with reverence, and sought to preserve them from attack. It follows, therefore, that however admirable his art, it was little calculated to inspire a school or to open a wider field to the student of nature. Later English landscape-art owes to him little more than the example of a sincere spirit finely trained according to a long-accepted conception of beauty and style; whereas to Gainsborough, on the other hand, our landscape-painters may almost be said to owe their liberty. And this fact was indeed recognised at the time, though in terms not always favourable to the painter's genius. When Reynolds says of him that he gave "a faithful if not a poetical representation of what he had before him," we know what he means because we know in what at that day the poetical element in art was held to consist. Looking back at Gainsborough's work now, it would seem rather to be open to the opposite reproach. Its

limitation, to our later sense, seems to lie not on the side of poetry but of fidelity, and the criticism which it excites is that in obedience to an imaginative impulse he handled nature too freely, and paid too little regard to absolute fact. If, for instance, we compare Gainsborough's studies of rustic character and peasant life with the work of an artist like Jean François Millet, they appear rather fanciful creations than veracious portraits. And so indeed they are, for the time had not yet come when art could hope to win the deeper kind of beauty which has grown out of a profounder knowledge of the actual life of the toilers in the fields. Despite their picturesque rags, Gainsborough's peasant people are for the most part only playing at poverty. They fill their place in the landscape with a pleasing grace that sorts with the scheme of the picture, but they scarcely convince us of their reality. And yet, judged in reference to the ideas of his day, Gainsborough was undoubtedly something of a revolutionist in landscape, and to his

courage and independence all later students remain heavily indebted. His example prepared the way for the stronger realism of Crome and the wider freedom of Constable. He broke the fetters which Wilson was content to wear, and so gave courage to others who were destined to win triumphs greater than his own.

Gainsborough was thirty-three years of age when he took up his residence at Bath, and his artistic gifts were already fully developed. At first, however, the position he occupied in the gay city of the west was modest enough. His price for a head was no more than five guineas, and it was only when patrons became numerous that he raised it to eight guineas. A little later he made a further advance upon this modest tariff, charging forty guineas for a half length and a hundred guineas for a full-length portrait. But while his income remained small as compared to the higher rewards which the modern artist has learned to expect, his fame grew quickly. Nor was the reputation he won at Bath merely local. In our time it would

scarcely be possible for a painter of Gainsborough's ambition to remain for fourteen years in a provincial town, and for the very sufficient reason that we have now no provincial town of the rank which fashionable society of the last century chose to assign to Bath. Thither the bright world of London was wont every season to betake itself; in a certain sense it formed an integral part of the capital, and a painter or a musician who had succeeded in winning favour from the visitors at Bath had little more to expect from fortune. Writing in 1779, only five years after he had removed to London, Gainsborough says of himself: "My present position with regard to encouragement, etc., is all that heart can desire, and I live at a full thousand pounds a year expense." He had already, even before he left Bath, become a favourite of the court, and a member of the newly-formed Royal Academy. As early as the year 1767 George III. had been attracted by his portrait of General Honeywood, shown in the exhibition

of the Society of Artists, and it was perhaps owing in some measure to royal influence that at the first exhibition of the Royal Academy he figures in the catalogue as a full member. It is clear at any rate that in the list of original members submitted to the king his name does not appear, and his election was therefore in some sense an afterthought. Gainsborough, however, seems at no time to have greatly concerned himself with the proceedings of this august body. For many years he was a contributor to the annual exhibition, but he attended no meetings of the society, and held no office therein. Indeed at one time the council were of a mind to strike his name off the list of members, but happily this foolish resolve was never carried into effect. He cannot, however, have been very popular with his fellow Academicians, for he had more than once to complain of the manner in which his pictures were hung. In the year 1772 he became so dissatisfied on this ground that for the four succeeding years he absented himself

altogether, and in 1784, on the occasion of another disagreement, he finally took leave of Somerset House, never again exposing himself to the annoyance of a quarrel. The cause of the dispute was trifling enough. He had sent for exhibition the full-length portrait group of the three princesses, and had made a special request that it should be hung upon the line. But it was then and is still the rule of the Academy that full-length portraits are not to be hung upon the line, and accordingly the council for the time being declined to entertain Gainsborough's application. There is no evidence that he felt very deeply on the subject. He did not wholly sever his connection with the Academy, nor was he tempted, like Barry, to publish his wrongs to the world. All that happened was, that he ceased henceforth to contribute to the annual exhibitions. It is very possible, however, that the incident may have affected his relations with Reynolds, who, as the President of the Academy, might no doubt seem to Gainsborough in a measure

responsible for its action. Unless, indeed, we assume some such undercurrent of feeling, it is difficult to understand the estrangement between these two distinguished men. That their differences never assumed a deeply personal character is sufficiently shown in the circumstances of their reconciliation; and as Gainsborough is known to have had some frailties of temper it is probable that of the two he was the more to blame. On his deathbed he sent for Reynolds, and his last words, which must always remain memorably pathetic, were whispered to one who could not consciously have done injustice to him or to any man.

“We are all going to heaven, and Vandyck is of the party”—such was Gainsborough’s simple leave-taking of the world. And it is a characteristic sentence, for it marks the special direction of his own art, and it shows us also whom it was he most constantly looked to as his master. Reynolds, if a like fancy had come into his mind at such a moment, would, we may think, have had another name upon

his lips. But Gainsborough was content with Vandyck, and with his narrower ambition he escaped the sort of failure that his rival was forced to confess. Not that we here set up Gainsborough as the equal of Vandyck; he himself would have been the first to repudiate any such pretension. The introduction of Vandyck's name need only serve to point to the particular ideal which the English painter had chosen for himself. Master and follower had at least this in common, that neither was deeply concerned with the intellectual problems of art, and that both will live as painters when much that boasts a higher purpose is forgotten. For it is as a painter, pure and simple, that Gainsborough appeals to us, and it was as a painter that the truth and beauty of nature appealed to him. He had, perhaps, not the ambition, he certainly had not the power, to use his art as a means of imaginative expression, but for the more immediate truth of character his appreciation was certain and keen. His vision was not profound, but it was quick and

delicate, and if he did not exhaust the beauty of any subject, he was at least careful never to disturb the lighter graces of expression which a more profound analysis is sometimes apt to miss.

During his residence at Bath Gainsborough made acquaintance with many of the bright spirits of the time. It was there he painted the portraits of Quin and Garrick, of Lady Grosvenor, Lady Ligonier, and Captain Wade. Mrs. Garrick used to declare that Gainsborough's was the best portrait of her husband ever produced, and this says much for the painter's skill in catching a likeness, for it is reported that the great actor was wont to vary the sittings by the most grotesque efforts of mimicry, which gave to his face the changing character of a chameleon. It was at Bath, too, that Gainsborough was first charmed by the voice and fascinated by the beauty of Miss Linley, and his portrait of her with her brother deserves to rank with Reynolds' exquisite rendering of the same subject. His delight in music seems indeed to have found ample exercise at Bath, and

there are quaint stories of the manner in which his enthusiasm displayed itself. Whenever he listened to any eminent musician he was immediately possessed by the boyish illusion that he could himself reproduce the excellence of the performance if only he could purchase the instrument. In this way he bought Giardini's violin and Abel's viol-di-gamba. At another time he was fascinated by Fischer's hautboy and Crosdil's violoncello, and finally, having seen a lute in a picture by Vandyck, he cast about until he had discovered a German professor who owned such an instrument, when, according to his biographer, the following amusing scene took place. Bursting in upon the professor, who was quietly smoking his pipe, the impetuous artist thus accosts him:—

“I have come to buy your lute. Name your price and I will pay it.”

“I cannot sell my lute.”

“Not for a guinea or two perhaps; but you must sell at some price, and so I tell you.”

“My lute is worth much money—ten guineas.”

"Indeed it is—quite that; see, here's your money. Good-day."

Scarcely, however, had the painter quitted the room than he was back again.

"I have forgotten something. What is your lute to me if I have not your book of airs?"

"Ah, Master Gainsborough, I cannot part with my book."

"Nonsense. You can make another at any time. See, here's the book I want, and here's another ten guineas for it."

The transaction seemed now complete; but at the last moment it would seem suddenly to have occurred to Gainsborough that he did not know how to play upon the lute. He accordingly returns once more.

"Dear me, what is the use of your book to me if I don't understand it, or of your lute if I cannot play on it? Come home with me at once, and give me the first lesson."

"I will come to-morrow."

"Come now."

"I must dress."

“You are admirably dressed.”

“I must shave.”

“I honour your beard.”

“I must, however, put on my wig.”

“Confound your wig! Your cap and beard become you well enough. Do you think if Vandyck wanted to paint you he’d let you be shaved? Come at once.”

And so the poor professor was dragged off and all earlier musical passions were forgotten in the new enthusiasm for the lute.

Gainsborough was so happily placed at Bath that it is likely enough he might not have removed to London at all but for his quarrel with Thicknesse. The particulars of their disagreement do not deserve discussion, but the quarrel had at least the effect of relieving Gainsborough of the obtrusive patronage of a bore, and of establishing his fame in the capital. The painter must at this time have felt very sure of future prosperity, for his domestic arrangements betokened none of the hesitation he had exhibited on the occasion of his entry

into Bath. He at once took possession of a part of Schomberg House in Pall Mall at a rental of £300 a year, and within a very short time he was in receipt of more commissions than he could possibly execute. George III. and his Queen sat for their portraits, the leaders of fashion followed the example of the court, and even the painter's landscapes came in for a share of public recognition. It was in 1778, four years after his arrival in London, that he painted his famous portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire, which is now best remembered by the mysterious circumstances of its sudden disappearance. This was not, however, the first time this notable lady had sat to him. At Althorp there is a delightful little picture by him of the Duchess as a child, which invites comparison with Reynolds' portrait taken about the same time. The resemblance between the two is so striking that there would seem little ground for the charge sometimes brought against the President of the Academy that his portraits were not likenesses, for if he failed on

this occasion Gainsborough must have failed in the same degree. But even the lost Duchess is scarcely so well known as another picture also produced about the same time. On the Continent Gainsborough's reputation lives by "The Blue Boy," the famous portrait of Master Buttall, said to have been executed for the purpose of exposing the fallacy of certain principles of colouring which Reynolds had laid down. Whether this be so or not Gainsborough's success in the task he had set himself is no longer questionable. To a genius in painting there are no rules that may not be broken, and it is certain that the author of "The Blue Boy" has proved that a picture may be brilliantly lighted even though the cool tones be allowed to predominate. Side by side with this famous experiment may be set the portrait of the Honourable Mrs. Graham, now in the National Gallery at Edinburgh.

The fame to which he had so quickly risen in London did not cure Gainsborough of his

original fondness for the country. At one time he made a lengthened tour to the English Lake district, and during the summer months of every year he was wont to betake himself to a cottage at Richmond, where he would constantly force into his service as models the children of peasants living in the neighbourhood. Once, indeed, he revisited Sudbury, but there is no evidence that he renewed in later life his earlier studies of Suffolk landscape. It is probable that he had in his portfolios sketches enough and to spare for any number of landscapes had he been encouraged to paint them. Numbers of these sketches have indeed survived to us, executed after a curious fashion of his own in a mixture of pencilling and wash, sometimes varnished over so as to give the appearance of a painting in oil.

In the early part of the year 1787 Gainsborough began to exhibit signs of failing health. One day when he was dining with Sir George Beaumont and Sheridan, his friends noted a marked change in his demeanour.

He who was usually so merry sat silent and melancholy, and before the dinner was half over he left the table and signed to Sheridan to follow him. "I shall die soon," he said, when they were outside the room; "I know it; I feel it. I have less time to live than my looks infer; but for this I care not. What oppresses my mind is this. I have many acquaintances and few friends, and as I wish to have one worthy man to accompany me to the grave I am desirous of bespeaking you. Will you come, ay or no?" Sheridan gave his word, and when they returned to the table Gainsborough resumed his wonted high spirits. But his gloomy presentiment proved, nevertheless, to be well founded. In the following year, during the trial of Warren Hastings, at which he was present, the painter felt the first premonitory warning of the disease that was to end his life. What was at first pronounced to be only a swelling of the glands proved unhappily to be a cancer, and on the 2d August he died at his house in Pall Mall.

"A great name his," writes Mr. Ruskin, "whether of the English or of any other school, the greatest colourist since Rubens, and the last I think of legitimate colourists; that is to say of those who were fully acquainted with the use of their material: pure in his English feelings, profound in his seriousness, graceful in his gaiety, there are, nevertheless, certain deductions to be made from his worthiness which I dread to make, because my knowledge of his landscape works is not extensive enough to justify me in speaking of them decisively: but this is to be noted of all that I know, that they are rather motives of feeling and colour than earnest studies; that their execution is in some degree mannered and alway hasty; that they are altogether wanting in affectionate detail, and that their colour is in some degree dependent on a bituminous brown and conventional green, which have more of science than of truth in them." This is surely a generous and a just appreciation of Gains-

borough's genius, which will commend itself to those who have closely studied his work; for although in some of his earlier landscapes there is evidence of a feeling for detail that was afterwards lost, Mr. Ruskin's judgment remains true of the general characteristics of his style. To his unquestioned eminence as a landscape-painter Reynolds had already long before borne testimony, and it was on one occasion when he was speaking of his dead rival as the greatest landscape-painter of his age that Wilson was heard to mutter, "Ay, and the greatest portrait-painter too." That opinion, however, has not yet received confirmation. The recent opportunities which the public have enjoyed of studying Reynolds' collected works still leave his supremacy undisturbed. Great as a portrait-painter Gainsborough undoubtedly was, and in the more fortunate moments of his art, when his fine natural gifts were happily inspired, the result leaves no room for rivalry. As a mere painter he will always hold his own, but behind his gifts as a painter, and always enriching

by their presence even the simplest essay in portraiture, Reynolds possessed intellectual qualities to which his rival can lay no claim. By their aid he was enabled to penetrate more deeply into character, and to bestow upon even a commonplace countenance something of his own intellectual dignity. Gainsborough's hand had an equal, and perhaps a greater magic, but he had not the same force of individuality, and his pictures have for that reason less variety of characterisation.

V.

ROSSETTI'S INFLUENCE IN ART.

IN the first of the lectures in which Mr. Ruskin has happily renewed his association with Oxford, there is a sentence which defines with eloquence and precision Rossetti's place in the modern art of England. "I may be permitted, in the reverence of sorrow," writes one who has outlived the leader of a movement which he, earliest among us, found the means to welcome and the force to defend, "to speak first of my much loved friend, Gabriel Rossetti. But in justice no less than in the kindness due to death, I believe his name should be placed first on the list of men within my own range of knowledge who have raised and changed the spirit of modern art: raised in absolute attainment, changed in direc-

tion of temper." This is a generous tribute to the memory of the deceased painter, and it comes from the right quarter. The stress of life and work will sometimes seem to put too far asunder the lives of men who, striving with a common purpose, must surely meet again at the goal, and it is therefore a peculiar pleasure to find that the heartiest word that has been said about Rossetti comes from the lips of one who has a full right to share the praise he bestows. Mr. Ruskin here speaks of a fellow-worker in terms that might not inaptly be applied to himself, for with the movement led by Rossetti his own name must ever be associated. He speaks in sympathy as well as with authority, and there is ground for the belief that the deliberate judgment to which he has committed himself is slowly gaining acceptance at the hands of the public. Slowly it must be, because a clear appreciation of the genius of the painter has only lately become possible to the world, and because even now it is still difficult to measure fairly the value of original experiments

in art made many years ago, and since carried by more gifted followers to nobler and completer issues. For it is in the earlier work of Rossetti that the true vindication of his fame will ultimately be found, work executed without reference to the public, and for the present somewhat eclipsed in importance by the more disputable achievement of later years.

And yet it is not certain that the seclusion which Rossetti chose to impose upon himself, though it may hinder the due appreciation of his talent, was therefore ill-advised. If his life had been passed in the open market-place of criticism perhaps he might not have found the courage to follow the ideals he had discovered for himself. These ideals, as we shall see, were strange to the temper of his time, and if the embodiment he was able to give to them has been the subject of exaggerated praise, the ideals themselves, however perfect the form in which they might have been expressed, could not at the outset have won immediate or general recognition. Rossetti influenced most powerfully

those who were at the time best prepared to receive his influence—men who could distinguish the newly-discovered principles of his art from its imperfections, and who, feeling deeply the worth of what he followed, knew also the difficulties which he had to encounter in the quest, and could therefore make the right allowance for all defect in the result. To his individual fame as an artist the long interval that has passed between the execution of his best work and its publication to the world has doubtless been a grave disadvantage. On a sudden, and with scarce any time for preparation, we are asked to take the measure of a man who brings a new message of beauty, and who brings it encumbered with certain imperfections of style and practice such as the least inspired members of our school can now find a way to avoid. Even painters of less pronounced individuality, who have not, as he had, to reconquer the whole dialect and phraseology of their art, need some time to win attention for the little that is original in them, and it is therefore no wonder that the public

should not at once appreciate a body of work new in its essence, and always unfamiliar, if not faulty, in its form. But though Rossetti's fame may suffer for a while from the fact that the time has not yet arrived for a discriminating judgment of the several phases of his career, the historical conscience, which is touched by such a case as his, will ultimately reassert itself; and in the meantime that which Mr. Ruskin has lately said remains indisputably true, and the cause he loved and which in his best moments we may be sure he valued more than fame, already owes more to him than to any other painter of our day.

And if this is so there can be no reason to speak otherwise than frankly of Rossetti's work. The estimate of his career, which I have borrowed from Mr. Ruskin, can be made good without extravagant or indiscriminate praise, and his genius when it is rightly apprehended will be seen to be of too masculine a temper to need to be championed for its shortcomings and defects. Those who knew Rossetti personally can never

be in doubt as to the original and surviving force that was in him. They will be in no fear lest the strength of his individuality should suffer by plain speaking, and although it is true that he shunned criticism while he lived, there can be no reason why his work should not now be temperately and dispassionately discussed, with a fair statement of its great merits and its obvious defects. Rossetti's strong personal feeling in regard to publicity has indeed given rise to some natural misconception as to the strength of his individuality. It is perhaps a plausible presumption that a man who so resolutely detaches himself from the ordinary social life of his time, and who prefers, even as regards his work, to avoid a constant reference to the public judgment of his contemporaries, is therefore secretly apprehensive lest the strength of his convictions should be shaken by attack. But such a conclusion fails to take into account a paradox of the artistic temperament by no means peculiar to Rossetti. The conditions which certain natures demand for the free exercise of their

faculties are often wholly unconnected with the strength or weakness of intellectual character: the process of artistic production may be helped or hindered by influences that leave untouched the central faith in which an artist labours; and so it will happen that a little outward discouragement finds sometimes too ready a response in that natural despondency with which every artist of fine temper and noble ambition views an uncompleted task. The disposition which dares not hazard these discouragements is perhaps to this extent sensitive and even morbid, but it is not therefore weak or faltering; for in apparent inconsistency, and yet in combination with a character which chooses in this way to guard itself from contact with the outer world, it is possible to encounter a clear and masculine judgment, and an intellect in quick and full sympathy with the varied intellectual movement of its time.

That this was so at least in Rossetti's case is known to all who knew him. In his presence it was impossible not to be impressed by the

extraordinary range of his intellectual appreciation, by the certainty and strength of his judgments, and by the unimpeachable security of his own personal convictions. If he chose to live apart and in seclusion it was assuredly from no inability to vindicate those principles in art which he had deliberately adopted, and for which he sought with steadfast persistence to find a worthy expression. His mind was of too robust a sort to cherish untried illusions, or to indulge in wilful caprice and affectation ; and for what is strange in the direction of his genius, or imperfect in the form of its embodiment, we must therefore seek some better explanation than that which is suggested by the outward habit of his daily life. For in the man, as he was known to his friends, nothing was more noticeable than the freedom with which an alert and vigorous intelligence played around all those deeper problems of thought and imagination that can confirm or disturb the principles of action. To this distinguishing quality of his mind—its constant readiness to entertain serious speculation on

matters of high spiritual import, and its youthful and generous appreciation of the ideas of youth — must be ascribed much of that peculiar charm and fascination now dearly remembered by all who enjoyed his society. In any earnest talk with Rossetti, even the youngest of the company might safely venture to declare his mind upon the matter. He was sometimes intolerant of indifference, but was always patient with real enthusiasm; and although he had ample store of irony and sarcasm at his command, they were weapons he would never employ to discourage imagination. His, indeed, was the higher sort of strength that did not count the love of beauty as a sign of weakness, and though his robust intellect seized by natural affinity upon the most vigorous achievements in art and literature, it left him with a delicate discernment of the kind of grace and tenderness that is apt to strain through the coarser fabric of minds less finely tempered, though not more masculine, than his. This association of strength and subtlety, of breadth and delicacy of appreciation,

is comparatively rare, even amongst those Englishmen who professedly concern themselves with the things of the imagination. We know, for instance, at what a sacrifice of all that makes for beauty Carlyle chose to assert his indisputable strength; at every turn in his writings we meet the signs of an ill-concealed impatience with poetry, of an avowed contempt of art: and yet even with him it already becomes plain to us that he lives and will live, not for the opinions he tyrannously sought to impose upon his generation, but for the imaginative and picturesque force he was able to command for their utterance.

In Rossetti's case it is this admixture of robust strength and penetrating refinement which partly explains the influence he has exerted over minds of varying constitution, and destined to choose the most widely divergent paths in art. The force of his personality has been felt and admitted in the practice of men who could never have hoped to appropriate his finer sense of beauty, men who were realists born and bred, but who, nevertheless, found in the uncom-

promising certainty of expression which stamps his earlier design a means of securing a closer contact with nature. And, on the other hand, the earnest and high purpose with which he sought to enlarge the vision of English painting, and to open to it a nobler inheritance of poetical truth, no less attracted to him the allegiance of others differently gifted, who came with no thought but for the beauty that is born of ideal invention, and who nevertheless equally gained from his example the encouragement and direction of which they stood most in need.

It is the task of criticism to seek to discover in the art of Rossetti the reflex of these high qualities by which he was known as a man. Nor is this altogether an easy task. To the things of the imagination we are too apt to apply a standard of criticism borrowed from the laws of the physical world. That the strength of a chain lies in its weakest link is true in mechanics, but it is not true in art or literature; a painter or a poet can only be fairly tested out of the best that he has given to the world: and

yet we are so impatient to be rid of the responsibilities of judgment by the invention of a formula that will seem to simplify our thought, that we are tempted to seize with too eager haste upon those productions of an artist wherein the characteristic features of his style are carried to excess. And in Rossetti's case this natural perversity of criticism is specially favoured by the circumstances of his career. The questionable and disputable elements in his art were developed at a time when he was justified by the encouragement of his admirers in attempting work of larger and more important scale, and it happens therefore that the paintings of his which make the most immediate appeal to the public eye are just those wherein the pronounced idiosyncrasies of his style are expressed with greatest extravagance. It was not the Rossetti of "La Bella Mano" or the "Blessed Damozel" who inspired the poetic realism of Millais and the patient labour of Holman Hunt, or who first stimulated and encouraged the imaginative design of Burne Jones; and yet by the work of the later period

of his life, to which these pictures belong, the artist is too often judged and known. At the time when these and other pictures of the class were produced, Rossetti had become possessed by an ideal in art that was not the ideal of his youth and early manhood. Certain individual types of beauty had now taken a morbid hold of his imagination, and human features whose subtlest truth of expression he could at one time patiently win from nature had now been transformed by him into detached symbols of some mystic thought, divorced, he scarcely knew how far, from the absolute semblance of reality. Always and even to the last working with the true temper of a poet, he had nevertheless parted with the secret by which the poet's thought can be translated into the language of art, a secret he himself had been the first to announce to those who looked to him for example. In the desire to press into a single face a message weightier than it can be made to bear, he was sometimes tempted to do violence to the simplicity of nature; the mystic sentiment that

he now sought as the dominant motive of his art caused him too often to forget or to neglect those earlier principles of vigorous and compact design, by whose aid alone the shape of a poet's vision can be enduringly fixed upon canvas; and colour, sharing the frailties of form, had become at the last so obscured by overclouded tone that there was scarcely a trace left of that brilliant patterning of vivid tints which had characterised his painting at a time when imagination laboured in such close and constant relation to fact, that the result was fit to inspire men of the most opposite schools of thought and practice.

To understand aright the secret of Rossetti's extraordinary influence, we must betake ourselves to the opposite limit of his artistic career. We must begin where he began, and note the means whereby he first sought and won the allegiance of his followers. Professor Ruskin vindicates his praise of the painter by reference to a single picture—"The Virgin in the House of St. John"; but this, if it be allowed to stand first in the list

of his earlier performances, is only the type of much else that was wrought in the same spirit and to the same end. It was in 1858, when Rossetti was already thirty years of age, that this drawing was executed, and he had then been at work for upwards of a decade. As a lad of twenty he had produced the "Girlhood of Mary Virgin,"—lately exhibited at Burlington House,—followed almost immediately afterwards by the still more beautiful picture of "The Annunciation." Nor was it only in sacred legend that he found scope for the exercise of an imagination that stamped upon every theme it touched the impress of a profoundly religious spirit. It is sometimes the custom to speak of Rossetti as though his art had grown up in a sort of mental prison-house, with no outlook upon the world of living men and women, whereas, in fact, there was no painter of the time whose vision took a wider range, or who could penetrate with such keen intellectual sympathy the beauty offered to art in the full store-house of history and romance. And when

he was so minded he could touch with scarcely less certainty and force the peculiar pathos of modern life. The picture called "Found," the design for which was completed in 1853, is, in its subject at least, an exceptional experiment for Rossetti, and yet where—even in the work of painters who have deliberately devoted themselves to the interpretation of modern drama—can we match the shamed and pitiful face of this ruined girl, who shrinks from the touch of the faithful lover who had lost her? In the beautiful study of the head, belonging to Mr. Schott, may be deciphered almost as clearly as in the poet's own words the sadness of a story that belongs to the darker life of a great city. The tightly-closed lips would fain keep their own secret, as the hidden eyes would shut out the sight of him who brings remembrance of the past, and yet it is of this happier past that we must think as we gaze at the ruined beauty of her suffering face:—

Ah! gave not these two hearts their mutual pledge
Under one mantle sheltered 'neath the hedge

In gloaming courtship? And, O God! to-day
He only knows he holds her;—but what part
Can life now take? She cries in her locked heart,
Leave me—I do not know you—go away!”

About the time when Rossetti gave this signal proof of his sympathy with the problems of our modern world, his imagination was also busy with the life of the past. In 1852 he produced the beautiful water-colour drawing of “Giotto painting the Portrait of Dante,” and before the close of the year 1855 he had expressed in the same material the design for the picture of “Dante’s Dream,” which now ranks as the largest and, in some sense, the most important achievement of his career.

Nor was it only with the art and poetry of Italy that his genius chose to ally itself. While William Morris was rekindling in verse the forgotten beauty of the Arthurian legend, Rossetti, in whom the poetic instinct always led and directed the forces of his art, was quick to divine the means by which painting also might share in the treasures of this newly conquered king-

dom of Romance. The series of water-colour drawings of this period, some of them directly illustrative of Mr. Morris' poems, must always retain their place as in some sense the most distinctly original work of his life. Such immaturity of power as they doubtless exhibit is far outweighed by the painter's firm grasp of the essential conditions of imaginative design, and by the force of individual impression through which all the material elements that go to the making of a picture are controlled and subdued. This quality of design, which is the life-blood of all art that strives for equal fellowship with the higher achievements of poetry, Rossetti could then employ with effect even though he denied himself the support and charm of colour. As early as the year 1847 he had produced the superb drawing in black and white of "Taurello's First Sight of Fortune," a work which, if it is viewed in relation to the current draughtsmanship of the date to which it belongs, will go far to measure the extent of the revolution in art that we now associate with Rossetti's name.

To this may be added the beautiful portrait of Miss Siddal standing by a window, a drawing of sustained and animated labour, in which an extreme refinement of tone and modelling is gained by lines of exquisite subtlety and precision: the five memorable drawings on wood for the illustrated edition of Tennyson's poems; the "Hamlet and Ophelia" belonging to Colonel Gillum, and last, though not least, the preparatory study made for the Oxford fresco of a face which ultimately impressed itself upon the painter's imagination with the force and authority of a settled type of beauty.

All these things belong to the earlier stages of Rossetti's career, and they are but chosen samples of the young painter's rich and varied accomplishments. At the age of thirty, he had already in some sense refashioned the current ideals of English art, appropriating to its uses new stores of poetry and romance, and revealing by his own practice and example the secret by which the visions of the poet might be shaped to the service of pictorial design. This, indeed,

constitutes his real claim to distinction, and it is here at last that we reach the true source of his influence over men whose minds were too seriously engaged to be deluded by any empty promise of the reality. The mere desire of ideal beauty would of itself have been no new thing in English art; for it must be allowed that the poetic ambition had haunted the spirit of many an English painter before the advent of Rossetti. Barry, Fuseli, West, Haydon, even Hilton,—they had all been professors of the grand style, had all believed that it was possible to painting to begin again just where Raphael and Michelangelo left off, and had all so far helped to discredit a cause to which some of them, at least, were passionately attached. It would have been late in the day to revive these hapless and hopeless experiments, nor could the attempt have won the support of a generation that had learned to recognise the supremacy of those English painters who had taken no part in the race for the ideal, but who had won a more enduring fame by simple reliance on nature.

Between Reynolds and Barry, between Wilkie and Haydon, there is now no doubtful choice, and at a moment when the claims of realism were once more asserting themselves, any endeavour to revert to a style that was already stamped with failure would most surely have proved fatal to its author and disastrous to his cause.

Nor would such an endeavour have been consistent with the special character of Rossetti's genius. A truer perception of what was possible and needful for the art of his time led him to seek inspiration in the work of those earlier schools of Europe where the realist and the poet still meet on equal terms; and wherein the exercise of the imaginative faculty leaves room for the faithful record of actual fact. To those who have not accustomed themselves to consider carefully the conditions which govern the processes of artistic degeneration and revival, there will appear to be something savouring of caprice in the enthusiasm with which the leaders of the præ-Raphaelite movement selected as models of

style men whose work was confessedly immature. To pass by the crowning triumphs of the great schools of painting, and to revert to the tentative experiments of earlier workers who were only struggling towards the same goal, is like a wilful inversion of the true and natural order of things. And in the realm of science perhaps it might be so. But the ascending scale of scientific research in which the last note is always the highest note, has no counterpart in the history of art, least of all in that higher range of art which claims the closest alliance with the imaginative spirit, and is therefore fated to share its shifting fortunes. Here the onward movement of advancing power and accomplishment, though it may seem for a while to be steadily maintained, is suddenly hurried forward by the force of individual genius to some triumph of unlooked-for splendour that discourages all hope of further progress. So it was, as we know, with the art of Italy at its crowning moment, and the very greatness of the men whose achievement closed a brilliant epoch was in itself

a lasting hindrance to any direct transmission of their power. For, by the time that the forms of simple nature passing through the hands of a race of gifted artists, and receiving from each in turn some new impress of individual feeling, had at last taken the final stamp of Michelangelo's mighty spirit, the issue, however noble in itself, could scarcely be turned to account by those who were seeking to regain the first principles of their craft. But the stream which had here grown to a torrent too broad to bridge and too deep to fathom, might be tracked to a point nearer to its source: what has become complex and difficult in the art of Michelangelo is told in simpler dialect by those who had gone before him; and it was therefore with a true sense of the high ambition of modern art, and a just estimate of its limited resources that Rossetti and those who were with him led the way to the earlier painters of Florence in whom the love of beauty had been newly awakened, and whose utterances are always clear, even though they may not be complete. In all that they gave to

the world the modest and yet passionate grasp of spiritual and material truth may well serve as an example and a warning to the artists of every school; for as their searching and quiet realism rebukes the confident audacity of later masters whose skill seems to boast a conquest over nature, so also and in equal degree their intense but reticent expression of emotional truth stands as an implied reproach against the laboured rhetoric of later art that would seek to adorn an idea over which the imagination has gained no real or complete control.

It was perhaps fitting that one who was himself both poet and painter should have been the chosen leader of this notable revival. For the revolution which he and others were seeking to effect had already found its counterpart in the history of English literature. The transformation of taste and style which we chiefly associate with the name of Wordsworth owed its strength and its endurance to the persistence with which the most gifted poets of the century, in despite of ridicule and in the face of criticism,

sought a new inspiration in the earlier and simpler forms of poetical composition. The eager delight with which they studied the old English ballads is strictly analogous to the enthusiasm shown by the painters of a later day for the work of the older Italian masters; and as Wordsworth, with his uncompromising determination to test the diction of poetry by reference to the ways of simple speech, may be regarded as the realist of the group, so Keats, whose nature was more deeply penetrated with the spirit of romance, may be distinguished above them all as the poet who welcomed the revolution as a means of securing a higher ideal of beauty. And if no one now thinks of questioning the justice of the instinct which led these men back to the earlier sources of poetry, it is because the literary sense of Englishmen is quickened and sustained by a splendid tradition. It is an art of native growth whose highest triumphs are widely enjoyed and well understood. But with painting the case is very different, so different indeed, that the occasional

efforts made to raise its vision to the imaginative level of English literature are still very commonly regarded as a deliberate affectation. Men who can read Keats without any violent shock to their common sense, and who will follow the genius of Shelley in its most aerial flights, have scarce any faith left for the artist who seeks to arouse a kindred emotion by the means proper to painting. They will even doubt if he himself has any true belief in his own creation, so strange to the temper of our time is all art that does not found itself on direct portraiture, or on the little drama of every-day life. This is the unavowed prejudice which Rossetti and those who labour in the same field have had to conquer, and it is because he was among the first to trust to his imagination, and to find out of the simpler art of the past a fitting form for its utterance, that he won and still retains the affectionate regard of all who hope for the future of our school.

For the purposes of illustration this analogy between literature and art may even be carried

a step farther. In the former we are all ready to recognise the distinctions of style and method appropriate to different classes of work. We do not expect, for example, to find in the verse of Keats the keen and pointed reference to the facts of social life that fitly marks the didactic poetry of Pope. We acknowledge without reserve that each has the right to employ the kind of realism that will best serve his ideal; and we do not complain of the sacrifice that is involved in the process. But this same acknowledgment is not so readily made in regard to art. The painter is expected to exhibit in combination all the gathered excellences of every style and school, and if in the endeavour to secure the higher qualities of design he deliberately renounces a measure of imitative illusion in colour, he is likely to be accused of a wilful neglect of the truths of nature. Even in reviewing the great achievements of the past, we do not always preserve a clear sense in this matter. There are many persons who can see no good reason why the sensuous charm of

Rubens' flesh painting should not have been added to Leonardo's searching and precise design, and who can scarcely discover how it happened that Tintoret, with both Michelangelo and Titian for his models, nevertheless failed to unite the excellences of both. And yet this sharp division between different ideals in art must be reckoned as the inevitable consequence of the painter's advancing mastery over his material. It had its origin long ago, while the school of Venice was still in its youth, and when the fading shadow of Mantegna's genius had melted into the golden sunlight of Titian's matchless colouring. He it was who invented for the world a new poetry in art, a poetry that dwells in the painter's brush, and that lives on the inexhaustible beauty that nature offers for imitation. For many a long day after his death the extent of the revolution he had effected was not clearly perceived, for the men who were his successors followed unconsciously in the way he had opened for them, and all the best art of Europe for two

centuries to come was based on portraiture, and on that closer and more magical relation to the tones and tints of nature which Titian had been the first to establish. It is only when an attempt is again made to revive the kind of design appropriate to the expression of a distinct poetical image that the artist becomes embarrassed by the need of selection and sacrifice. The resources which modern art has directly inherited by tradition are then seen to be both more and less than he requires for the new adventure. Something has to be deliberately relinquished, something also must be recovered from the almost forgotten art of the past, and at such a juncture it is scarcely wonderful if the leader of the new movement should exhibit in his painting a kind of imperfection from which the unquestioning work of his contemporaries can more readily escape.

In reviewing the later paintings of Rossetti it is easy to perceive that he found it sometimes hard to exclude altogether from his view those tendencies of style against which at the outset

of his career he had made the first and the stoutest protest. Something indeed of the change and development that has been noted in the wider history of art finds a reflex in the course of his individual practice. In the ten years immediately succeeding the period which ended with the production of the painting mentioned by Mr. Ruskin, his technical powers reached the highest point of proficiency to which they at any time attained. To these years belong the "Beata Beatrix," "The Loving Cup," "The Beloved," the "Monna Vanna," "The Blue Bower," and the "Lady Lilith." In the early part of the time he had produced the drawing of "Cassandra," and the design for the frontispiece to *The Italian Poets*, the water-colour drawings of "Paolo and Francesca," and the "Heart of the Night." It is the central period of Rossetti's career, a season wherein the earlier and the later ideals of his art meet and divide, and when he could command for the expression of both the fullest measure of technical resource. An unexampled

richness and splendour of colour is the one quality that is common to the varied work of these ten years, and in this respect such pictures as the "Monna Vanna" and "The Beloved" are clearly distinguishable from all that had gone before and from all that followed. The pure gem-like tints of his earlier painting had been fused and blended by a new sense of realism, but they had not yet been tarnished by the obscurity of tone that shrouds and shadows the work of later life. And this nearer approach to illusion in the treatment of colour is indicative of a deeper change in the spiritual direction of Rossetti's art. Gradually—at first, indeed almost imperceptibly—the individual qualities of the model gain a more complete ascendancy over his imagination. He begins to concentrate his forces upon the interpretation of distinct types of beauty, no longer using nature as the material out of which he might carve his own invention, but accepting what it offers as the determining motive of his work. A single comparison will serve to mark the

significance of this change, and to illustrate its influence upon his design. The "Lady Lilith" and the drawing for the frontispiece to *The Italian Poets* are both of about the same date. The latter was executed in 1863, and in the following year the same composition was utilised in the water-colour drawing of "The Rose Garden:" to the year 1864 belongs also the "Lady Lilith." But this agreement in point of time is manifestly consistent with a marked divergence of character, for as we contrast the two works we feel instinctively that the one belongs to the future of Rossetti's art and the other to the past. In the frontispiece to *The Italian Poets* the sentiment of design is still uppermost in the artist's mind; nature has been used and even carefully studied, but it has been used to assist and confirm a settled and preconceived idea of poetical beauty. The "Lady Lilith," on the contrary, starts from the conception of portraiture, and the ideal suggestion, whatever may be its force and fascination, only follows, and does not directly inspire, the

reality. It has its own charm of sensuous and sumptuous beauty, uninjured as yet by the kind of exaggeration that overtook the painter in after years. It marks a period during which the contending forces of his earlier and his later style were held in equilibrium, and when his manner of painting combined in some degree the excellence of both. But even the great and brilliant qualities of such a work as this only serve to emphasise the adoption by the artist of an ideal in which his original gifts of poetical design were destined to hold a subordinate place.

If Rossetti had been content to accept the temper as well as the means that belong to realistic painting, this change in the direction of his art might not have affected its value. There are many men in art as in literature who only win the highest triumphs when they have rid themselves of the kind of poetic ambition that haunts the season of youth, and in its place have learned to be content with the realities of nature. Some of the noblest painting

that remains to us is frankly founded upon the direct and simple observation either of the truths of human character or of the beauty of the outward world, and it therefore implies no reproach against a painter that he should elect in later life to put aside the fanciful ideals that had tempted the vision of a boy. But the course of Rossetti's art tells a different story. He was a poet to the end of his days, and though he might seek to divert the strong imaginative impulse with which he had set out upon his career, he could not escape its influence. And so in his case the change that came over his art was not healthful but hurtful; for the poet's vision, no longer finding for itself the earlier form of utterance, left him still unsatisfied with the kind of beauty that might have contented a different order of mind. The individual forms and faces that he chose to present did not now suffice for the purpose for which he sought to employ them. Unconsciously, perhaps, he began to force and exaggerate the reality he

was no longer able to control, and it sometimes happened that the result was far removed alike from the intricate beauty of his early design and from the simplicity and truth of portraiture. This is not the place to attempt to examine the causes that may have led to these significant changes in Rossetti's painting; it is enough for our present purpose to note their effects. It is the penalty which natures such as his have to pay, that their art and their life are closely interwoven and cannot by any means be divorced. From the first Rossetti had thrown himself wholly and passionately into his work, giving to it the best that was in him, and it is scarcely wonderful, therefore, that, with the failing health of later years, there should have come some evidence of a corresponding failure in the task that he had set himself to accomplish.



700/CAR



10786

